

**THE ENGAGED EXPERIENCE:
VISITOR NARRATIVES
IN THE ART GALLERY**

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ABSTRACT

Within contemporary cultural climates there has been a significant instrumentalised focus on the role of museums and galleries in the promotion of positive mental health and well-being. The emotional and psychological components embedded within such aspirations however present a number of fluid and intangible challenges that require in-depth research if deeper understanding of such processes and claims are to take place. My research addresses philosophies, strategies, and practicalities through searching for a better understanding of individual encounters with paintings in gallery settings. It provides a possible framework for evaluating affectivity and emotional engagement in cultural organisations.

While acknowledging the intellectual and social impact of the visitor experience, this research focuses on the affective encounter of the individual, unaccompanied visitor. Both the successes and complications of evaluating the complexities of visitor experience have been addressed through multi-methodological research. The research demonstrates how art galleries are an important resource for inspiring emotionally engaged and affective experiences beyond the organised social activity predominantly used to promote positive mental health and well-being. The focus on emotion and affectivity also provides an alternative to the emphasis on cultural organisations as a vehicle for narrowly defined learning.

Through the collection, correlation, analysis and presentation of visitor's experiential narratives I uncover a 'rise of the visceral' in the cultural sector and greater differentiation of audiences in Museum Visitor Studies. I achieve this through positioning the engagement with paintings as a form of *memento mori* and *memento vitae*, which provide an emotionally affective and engaged impact potentially conducive to an altered state of mental health and well-being.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction: Visualising the Scene



Figure 1

Listed

1886

William Henry Gore
Guildhall Art Gallery

There is a quiver in my chest and a peculiar stirring in my stomach that might be defined as butterflies. My skin is permeated by a slight shivering sensation as I am immersed in the scene in front of me. I recall the term taught to me by an Art History teacher many years previously – ‘transcapillary tremulation’ – that feeling of looking at art when the hairs on the back of your neck stand up through wonder, awe and excitement. The painting I stand in front of has this exact affect on me – really captivating me every time I come into proximity of its emanating aura. The painting is ‘Listed’ (1886) by William Henry Gore.

Whilst it could be argued that there are many more renowned,

dynamic or skilfully executed paintings, there is something about this painting that always has an emotional, psychological and physical affect on me. Every time I find myself at the Guildhall Art Gallery this particular painting draws me in, having the same potent impact on me as the very first time I saw it. To me this is a sign of significant engagement with a painting. 'Listed' captivates me and invokes emotion probably more than any other painting I have seen. It instils a curious sense of nostalgia and sentimentality – a sense of consuming love, passion and potential separation or loss.

The content, colour and stylistic execution of the painting all play their part in the effect created, combining to produce an immersive experience. The dusky glow exuding from the canvas seems to be synonymous with a sense of an ending – the literal end of the day and the metaphorical representation of the end of a particular time of life. The combination of the body language and inherent pathos clearly suggest a farewell between husband and wife, those in a serious relationship, or two lovers. At the least the pose of the couple and the subdued lighting add a sense of sadness and solemn severity to the events taking place within the painting, even if it might not appear to everyone to be a parting of ways. Through reading the title one can then assume that this is a man who has been enlisted in the army and will shortly be going away from his home and family to fight for his country. During the time 'Listed' was painted it was a custom to adorn one's hat with patriotic ribbons on enlistment, another iconographic representation of the imminent involvement in war. [A fact I discovered latterly to seeing the painting for the first time.]

Whilst I can claim no direct experience of the situation conveyed in the painting, the body language is so naturalistic that it does instil in me a sympathetic sentiment of humanistic experience that we all share at some point in our life – the sadness of saying goodbye to a

loved one. For me this painting embodies both a deep sense of love and attachment, as well as an impending sense of separation. Instinctively I apply the perceived meaning of the painting to my own life, which then provokes in me the personal, emotional response I have each time I engage with this painting.

The skilful execution of a naturalistic scene and the evocative fading light of dusk enhance the emotionality of this painting. With such naturalistic scenery the viewer can really be transplanted into the image and imagine what it would feel like to be standing in this countryside as evening falls, saying goodbye to a loved one. To me this promotes emotional attachment through humanistic empathy, which I really believe enhances engagement with paintings. Here the culturally and temporally transcending feelings of love and loss become synonymous and evocative within one canvas to create an affective experience.

Arabella¹

This is an account of an affective encounter I had with an original painting (Figure 1, p. 15) in an art gallery.² The encounter would be deemed as affective because interacting with the painting evoked certain outcomes – predominantly of an emotional and intangible nature, but also with related physiological symptoms. The intangible outcomes were feelings of nostalgia, sentimentality, love, passion, loss, sadness, sympathy and empathy. The physiological reaction included the ‘quiver in my chest’ and ‘peculiar stirring in my stomach’; the hairs on the back of my neck stood up. It is possible to decipher all of this from the text I have provided, the language I have used and the analysis of this narrative. Through producing a ‘story of experience’ I am able to gain an insight into the impact engaging with a painting in an art gallery has on me. This was a painting I had no previous

¹ All isolated quotes from the data collection for this research are presented in italics to readily identify them as extracts of experiential narratives. The quotes from the research data embedded in the main body of the text are not in italics.

² Full details for this illustration can be found in Appendix 1, p. 309. The full details of all images, including an illustration, can be found in Appendix 1 of this thesis (pp. 309 - 323).

knowledge or experience of, elevating the affective and visceral above factual knowledge. A predominant component of this encounter was the emotional impact, which is intrinsically related to the fields of mental health and well-being. Whilst there are of course other contributing factors to these two fields – such as physical health, hereditary aspects, more complex psychological considerations and personal circumstance – all encounters we have in life contribute to our overall life experience, emotional engagement with the world, and hence our mental health and well-being. This includes visits to cultural organisations. However, could it be claimed that the impact on an individual from one momentary encounter, or a collection of similar encounters, is potentially conducive to positive mental health and well-being? Whilst such encounters and emotional outcomes are an inherent contributory component of general mental health and emotional well-being, can we justifiably substantiate the role of cultural organisations in mental health and well-being whilst such experiences are deeply embedded within a much wider and complex socio-cultural context? If so, in what ways does this engagement with cultural organisations impact on mental health and well-being, and what is the role of paintings in this process of affectivity?

Since the 1990s there has been an increasingly prevalent focus on the role of museums and galleries in the promotion of the positive mental health and emotional well-being of visitors. This has been embedded in, and influenced by, the contemporary socio-cultural, political and economical climate in which cultural organisations are constantly developing and diversifying approaches to audience engagement. Research and evaluation are required for the acquisition of knowledge and the cultivation of informed development, especially due to the fluid and intangible concepts that have arisen from the emotional and psychological components within audience engagement and Museum Visitor Studies. As well as assessing and championing the commendable work carried out by cultural organisations, it is also important to highlight the problematisation of such claims, endeavours, practice and research. For example, with further inquiry it has been discovered that much of the practice and research associated with mental health and well-being in cultural organisations has been based on organised social interactivity and pre-planned activities. Whilst this work is highly credible and

valuable it has provided a niche for further research into the experience of the individual visitor directly engaging with collections, as well as further investigation into the problematisation of substantiating claims based on such complex fields as mental health and well-being. Due to my own knowledge, and the evident gap in identifiably available public knowledge, my research has been cultivated to focus specifically on the experience of the individual, unaccompanied visitor engaging with paintings in art galleries. This has also provided an opportunity to demonstrate how visitors to art galleries can engage with paintings irrespective of the often perceived requirement of factual knowledge and instead through focussing on a more generally accessible, directly emotional and affective encounter – a visceral and holistically ‘engaged experience’. Significant contribution to the fields of Museology, Museum Visitor Studies and Art History will be made through my research.

My research will take the form of a thorough Literature Review and in-depth multi-methodological research study. Due to the nature of the subject matter the Literature Review will be inter-disciplinary, including: Aesthetics, Educational Theory, History, Art History, Museology, (Museum) Visitor Studies, Philosophy and Psychology; as well as cultural, governmental and mental health agendas. Whilst I have extensive knowledge of Art History and Museology I do not claim a thorough knowledge of the other fields. Due to my specific expertise and the finite nature of a thesis I will not be able to go into extensive detail in all of the areas covered or be able to account for all the complexities, controversies and different opinions running through each field and subject matter. Consequently I provide a general overview or contextual focus for the purposes of comprehending and engaging with my thesis.

The in-depth multi-methodological research study will also be varied. The main reason for this approach is to most effectively and credibly account for the intangibility and fluidity of the integral components of the research – particularly affect, emotions, mental health and well-being. The methodology was created to produce a robust mechanism for acquiring useful and insightful data through an online survey; an on-site survey; a small-scale ethnographic research study; and

auto-ethnography. Using Narrative Research and the 'messy method' (Law, 2004, 2007; Law and Urry, 2004) as a methodological framework I intend to capture a wide array of 'stories of experience', or experiential narratives, to assess the impact of engaging with paintings in art galleries and an insight into any possible claims that can be made from this information related to mental health and well-being.

There are various contentious and indeterminate aspects of affective and emotional experience, as well as considerations of mental health and well-being more generally. One of the most complicated concerns when researching affect, emotion, mental health and well-being is the use of language used by those describing experiences, as well as the subjective interpretation made by the author of the research. In my above description of engaging with a painting my account is informed, even if subconsciously, by having studied Art History to degree level and Museum Education at MA level, as well as adopting various professional roles in the cultural sector. Therefore, one might consider me especially well equipped to verbalise an experience of engaging with a painting. This would not always be the case for everyone – people will have varying degrees of the experience of engaging with paintings and a diversification of linguistic expression. Whilst this is an important consideration, the research is predominantly interested in the experience itself and the language that is used, rather than the background of individuals and how this relates to the experience. My own experience and specialist knowledge of verbalising engagement with visual culture will be applied to the accounts provided by all participants in the subsequent research. This will most directly account for their own individual experiences and approach to linguistic expression, irrespective of varying degrees of topical and experiential knowledge. In other words, I (and the research methods I employ) act as the anchored constant in the research through my own knowledge, understanding and interpretation; the participants and their encounters will be the variables from which general themes will emerge.

Throughout this thesis I acknowledge an awareness of these complications and the evasive nature of capturing and deciphering the direct humanistic experience,

particularly due to the complexities of linguistic expression. At the very least it is possible to provide an example of how the expression of experience and analysis of narrative can help us better understand an otherwise completely intangible and fluid phenomenon. My research aims to further explore and develop our understanding of the experience of engaging with paintings in the art gallery, and how we can more succinctly define and evaluate this experience. The outcomes of the research will help cultural organisations, and anyone involved in the process of visual engagement, better understand the impact of engaging with visual imagery, specifically in the art gallery. This could assist with providing relevant exhibitions, experiences, resources and provision for visitors. The research will also help those who visit art galleries to better understand and enhance their own experience of engaging with paintings in this semi-structured environment, at times irrespective of their own factual knowledge. Overall, the emphasis of the thesis will be based on an elevation of the importance of the affectively and emotionally engaged experience through the rise of the visceral, as well as an assessment of the role of museums and galleries in the promotion and cultivation of mental health and emotional well-being.

Origins and Context

The increased national and international emphasis on concerns of mental health and well-being became particularly apparent in the UK with the introduction of the governmental mental health and social inclusion agendas introduced in the late 1990s. When Labour took over from the Conservatives in 1997 the new Prime Minister, Tony Blair, introduced the Social Exclusion Unit with a wide and general remit of addressing what he stated as ‘the greatest social crisis of our times’ – the ‘millions of people who lack the means to participate in economic, social, cultural and political life’ (The Guardian, 2005).³ In 1999, The National Framework for Mental Health (Department of Health) followed this in a more directive capacity through a 10-year programme dedicated specifically to this area of health and social exclusion. The disbanding of The National Service Framework for Mental Health in 2009 was a catalyst for the creation of many other organisations

³ The first quote is by Tony Blair and cited in the article; the second quote is from the article.

dedicated to addressing mental health and well-being in the UK, and an opportunity for society and the community to more generally adopt these agendas.

Whilst it is hard to determine whether influenced by the governmental sector or developed in its own autonomous capacity, the role of addressing mental health and well-being filtered into the cultural sphere. The most notable demonstration of the cultural sector, and particularly museums, embracing mental health and well-being was seen in the early 21st century. In 2009 the organisation Culture: Unlimited published the paper 'Museums of the Mind: Mental Health, Emotional Well-being and Museums' (Culture: Unlimited, 2009). This paper was both a demonstration of the little-known work being done by museums in the field and also provided examples of how the cultural sector could further endorse and promote these endeavours.

There are earlier examples of the endorsement of the visual arts in the promotion of positive mental health and well-being, with particular emphasis on the affective and therapeutic qualities of engaging with paintings. As early as the mid-20th century there were advocates for the benefits of looking at paintings, as seen in the instigation of the charitable organisation 'Paintings in Hospitals', which was founded in 1959 to promote the display of paintings in medical and healthcare institutions. These therapeutic benefits of paintings located within medical settings, including waiting rooms, has continued to be endorsed since this time, with more recent research being carried out in Scotland (Cusack, Lankston and Isles, 2010; Lankston et al 2010).

There has also been an increased assessment of the more intangible humanistic qualities through both the government (Office for National Statistics, September 2010, November 2012, September 2013) and Visitor Research Studies of cultural organisations (Falk, 2009; Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2005). More recently 'The Happy Museum Project' was launched, which aims to provide 'a leadership framework for a growing group of museums to investigate a holistic approach to sustainability and wellbeing' (The Happy Museum Project website, n.d.). This was spearheaded by the Museum of East Anglian Life and has been funded by both the

Paul Hamlyn Foundation Breakthrough Fund and by Arts Council England Renaissance Funding. Subsequently, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) launched 'The Cultural Value Project' (AHRC, 2013) to assess the significance of engagement with the arts in Britain. Additionally there has been an increase in events and projects in the cultural sector focussing on the promotion of mental health and well-being, with particular emphasis on social interactivity and facilitated activities. These pursuits are a fervent demonstration of the increased interest in mental health and well-being in Britain generally and the cultural sector specifically – each having provoked, informed or facilitated my research. To further demonstrate the current prevalence of these fields and the relevance of my research, the Museums Association recently held their annual conference in Liverpool with two seminar themes being titled 'The Therapeutic Museum' and 'The Emotional Museum'. The former theme investigated how museums can demonstrate that they can make a real and lasting difference to the quality of a person's life'; whilst the latter theme focused on how museums 'need to become places where emotion is encouraged, where stories are told and where a visceral response is preferable to an intellectual one' (Museums Association, 2013).

The Researcher

From my own perspective – like centuries of philosophers, writers, art historians, academics and other cultural professionals that precede me – I am primarily interested in the 'interplay of feeling and perception' (Armstrong, 2000: 41). Having studied Art History and Museums and Galleries in Education at university, I have gained an increased interest over the years in how people engage with art galleries, museums and other cultural organisations – both the tangible and intangible aspects. Due to my own knowledge, experience and predilections this interest is particularly centred on the experience of the affect of engaging with paintings in the context of the art gallery, as well as the replication of visual imagery and the associated engagement with alternative incarnations of artworks. Why and in what ways do people engage with paintings? How does this 'perception' of visual imagery 'affect' the individual engaging with paintings in the art gallery? What is the role of this affective and emotionally engaged experience

within the wider parameters of the mental health and well-being of the visitor? How can these encounters most effectively be defined and the impact of these experiences and intangible outcomes be assessed? There has been various research into 'interpretative strategies' for cognitive 'meaning-making' (e.g. Hooper-Greenhill et al, 2001), as well as intellectual and social experience and outcomes (e.g. Hein, 1998; Hooper-Greenhill, 1999). However, there is little apparent or accessible research into the affective experience of engaging with paintings in the art gallery, especially considered within the parameters of mental health and well-being. Using my own knowledge, this research will contribute an insightful, expansive understanding of this area of cultural experience and practice to inform future development and research.

The Research Parameters and Rationale

The title of the present research is:

The Engaged Experience: Visitor Narratives in the Art Gallery

My research focuses on the experience of the unaccompanied visitor engaging with paintings within the context of the art gallery, predominantly for the purpose of investigating affective and emotive impact within the wider parameters of mental health and well-being. The experiential narratives of individuals were gathered through a multi-methodological approach that included an online survey; an on-site survey; and a small-scale ethnographic study on-site at a specific art gallery. The integral core of the research was based on the experiential narratives acquired through interviews with eleven participants with non-specific backgrounds following a self-led tour of an art gallery in London. This has been supplemented with auto-ethnographical data.

For the purpose of articulating this research I will define the terms that are the principal pivotal focal points for assessment – the painting, art gallery, mental health and well-being. The painting is interpreted as 'the application of colour, pigment, or paint to surfaces' (*Dictionary of Arts*, 1994: 392). The art gallery is the

organised and institutionalised space that houses these paintings. As the research is also located within the wider context of cultural organisations the term museum will be used to include both museums and art galleries, whilst the terms will be used separately when the area being discussed might differ slightly respectively. When I am concentrating on the main environment for this research, the art gallery, I will use that term specifically.

The painting and art gallery are investigated within the wider parameters of mental health and well-being. These are terms in their own right but also often intrinsically associated with each other. Mental health has been defined as ‘a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community’ (World Health Organisation, 2011). Mental health is also associated with wider psychological concerns and conditions. This corresponds with the dictionary definition of well-being as ‘the state of being comfortable, healthy or happy’ (The Oxford Concise English Dictionary, Pearsall, 1999).

Aims and Objectives

Aims:

- Development of the knowledge and understanding of the affective and emotive experience of engaging with paintings in the art gallery.
- Development of a concise and coherent definition of the affective and emotive experience of engaging with paintings in the art gallery.
- Assessment and development of the evaluation of intangible and fluid outcomes of visitor experience, such as: affect, emotion, immersion, spirituality, distraction, embodiment and liminality.
- Development of the knowledge and understanding of the role of mental health and well-being in the practice of cultural organisations and Museum Visitor Studies.
- Assessment of the construction of visitor experiential narratives and

how they are linguistically expressed.

- The production of a thematic framework for the comprehension of the affectively and emotively engaged experience in the art gallery through the collection, analysis and implementation of experiential narratives.
- The production of a dynamic catalyst for further research into affect, emotion, mental health and well-being in the cultural sector, providing a foundation for my own subsequent research and that of others. This research could inform academics, professionals in cultural organisations, research bodies, governmental agendas and individuals.

Objectives:

- A thorough interdisciplinary Literature Review of the affective and emotional experience of visiting cultural organisations; the process of engagement with paintings in the art gallery by visitors; and the role of mental health and well-being in cultural organisations.
- An in-depth empirical exploration of the experience of engaging with paintings in the art gallery through a multi-methodological research study.
- The evaluation of intangible and fluid outcomes of the visitor experience (e.g. affect, emotion, immersion, spirituality, distraction, embodiment and liminality) to produce a coherent thematic framework.

Conceptual Framework

My research has a strong affinity with Aesthetics, which provided a foundation to develop a relevant conceptual framework. Aesthetics is employed through using its interdisciplinary and historically conscious discourse to define a 21st century incarnation of the 'aesthetic experience'. This contemporary definition aims to account for the current emphasis on a more widely accessible, subjective, immersive, emotional and embodied experience of engaging with paintings. Whilst the term 'aesthetic experience' has taken a convoluted and controversial path, I hope to re-instate it as a useful and accessible term that can account for the varied,

intangible and fluid experience of engaging with the external, and particularly visual, world through embodied encounter. This aesthetic experience is available to everyone through being subjectively-conceived, irrespective of the perceived assertions of the hegemonic cultivation of taste and beauty or the ingrained doctrine of required knowledge.

My research is also located within the parameters of an established theoretical framework, whilst adapting and developing past discourse. The framework is based on a dualism of Narrative Research (e.g. Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, 2008; Chase, 2005; Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Goodson 2013) and 'messy method' (Law, 2004 and 2007; Law and Urry, 2004). Through adopting Narrative Research I am able to account for the implementation of experiential narratives – my own 'stories' and those of research participants. Many of the principles embedded within Narrative Research adhere to my own research interests and the concept of experiential accountability. Due to the integral function of linguistic expression and analysis in my research, Narrative Research is the most relevant theoretical framework to employ. It is supplemented with adoption of the 'messy method' as defined by John Law and John Urry (Law, 2004 and 2007; Law and Urry, 2004), which endorses a 'messy' multi-methodological approach to Social Science research to account for and capture the complexity and intangibility of the 'messy' real world. As Law (2004) suggests, 'much of the world is vague, diffuse or unspecific, slippery, emotional, ephemeral, elusive or indistinct, changes like a kaleidoscope, or doesn't really have much pattern at all' (Law, 2004: 2). While questioning where this predicament leaves Social Science research, Law suggests that due to this interpretation of the real world Social Science needs to embrace a varied and multi-methodological approach to account for its multifarious nature. Through asserting that Social Science research is 'about creating metaphors and images for what is impossible or barely possible, unthinkable or almost unthinkable', Law (2004: 6) inadvertently makes a link between 'messy method and Narrative Research, producing a mutuality that leads to being natural allies. Both approaches are about capturing, correlating, consolidating and interpreting the complexities of human experience and our expression of it.

Methodology

Literature Review

A thorough and in-depth inter-disciplinary Literature Review was carried out to provide a stable and credible foundation for my research. Due to the varied and complex nature of the integral components of the research the interdisciplinary areas addressed include: Aesthetics, Educational Theory, History, Art History, Museology, (Museum) Visitor Studies, Philosophy, and Psychology. Through this in-depth review of literature and practice in these fields – as well as political, cultural and other national research and agendas – I have been able to provide a strong foundation from which to carry out a multi-methodological research study.

Multi-methodological Research Study

Based within the bipartite framework of Narrative Research and ‘messy method’, a multi-methodological study was devised to most expansively accommodate the elusive entities in this field of research. This multi-methodology consisted of four parts: an online survey; an on-site survey at an art gallery; an on-site small-scale ethnographic research study at an art gallery; and an auto-ethnography. Due to the site of the research being located within one gallery this presented information that was specific to that particular environment and collection, whilst also producing general themes and outcomes that could be theoretically applied to other cultural organisations. Through implementing an ethnographic study it was possible to account for an acknowledgement that each cultural organisation has tangible and intangible specificity but within general concepts that could apply to all cultural organisations – such as the environment, collections, and curatorship and interpretation. Collectively this multi-methodology provided comprehensive experiential narratives to inform and structure the resulting thesis.

Online Survey:

The online survey was created to produce a foundation for gauging the experience of engaging with paintings, and to assess how people respond to the research of these experiences. This aspect of the research employed the Social Science Survey Method as an empirical tool for gathering data

(Babbie, 1995; Fielding, 2007; LeCompte and Schensul, 2010, 2012; Schensul and LeCompte, 2013; Vehovar and Manfreda, 2008). Surveys have been widely used as a standard tool for data collection, particularly for researching a larger sample size. It was apparent at this stage that the other aspects of the research methodology would be based on a small sample size for gathering in-depth qualitative data. By initially collecting basic responses from a larger sample size it was possible to provide a more expansive, robust foundation for the substantiation of the general – but not generalised – experience of engaging with art galleries and paintings.

A pilot study was developed to trial the survey with MA and PhD students in the Art, Design and Museology Department at the Institute of Education, as well as with acquaintances who have a spectrum of knowledge and experience of art galleries and paintings. The pilot online survey provided the opportunity to develop and adapt the questionnaire to produce a more effective form. This new questionnaire was then circulated via the Internet and email, with the hope that it would be disseminated organically to gather a reasonable sample size. The survey aimed to assess the perceived knowledge and experience of individuals about visiting art galleries and engaging with paintings, whilst gathering experiential narratives from the respondents about engaging with a particular painting. The experiential narratives were analysed to identify any evident themes and vocabulary of the impact of paintings on the individual, particularly related to affectivity, emotions, mental health and well-being. The use of language and narrative also informed latter research through a developed comprehension of approaches to evaluating visitor experiences and the engagement with visual imagery.

On-site Survey:

An On-Site Survey was carried out at the Guildhall Art Gallery in the City of London, the chosen location for the subsequent small-scale ethnographic research study. The survey utilised questionnaires consisting of similar content to the online survey, as well as visit-specific questions similar to

those that would be used as prompts in the small-scale ethnographic research study. No pilot study was carried out for this survey as the questions had been trialled through the pilot online survey and pilot ethnographic research study. This on-site survey was carried out with a small sample size and provided a sufficient foundation for understanding the experience of visitors to this specific gallery, contributing to the process of carrying out the in-depth small-scale ethnographic research study. The on-site survey explored related concepts and themes applicable to cultural organisations more generally and the evaluation of visitor experience. The data was correlated and analysed to develop the understanding of the visitor experience to art galleries, the engagement with paintings and the evaluation of these processes.

Ethnographic Research Study:

The small-scale ethnographic research study was carried out on-site at the Guildhall Art Gallery. It was first piloted with people known to me in a social, academic or professional capacity with varying knowledge and experience of art galleries and paintings. The ethnographic study consisted of a self-guided tour of the art gallery, with the participants being able to document or 'map' their visit through the use of a camera, map and paper whilst attempting to retain as natural an experience as possible. This self-guided tour was followed by a semi-structured, open-ended interview. The aim was to create a narrative journey of the experience of visiting the art gallery and engaging with paintings. Narrative Research methods were used to code and analyse the data to create an experiential narrative of each of the participants. This would then be embedded in the wider narrative of the affective and emotional gallery visiting experience, as well as the narrative of the role of museums and galleries in mental health and well-being.

The original intention was to carry out this element of the research with general visitors to art galleries. Due to the difficulty of sourcing willing voluntary participants, the study was carried out mainly with the students on an MA Museums and Galleries in Education course at the Institute of

Education (University of London), with an additional small supplementary collection of other participants. Using this group of participants for the research has both its positive attributes and problematic elements – as with any research group and methodology. Due to the varied academic and professional backgrounds of the students, and their status as people who have visited or would be likely to visit an art gallery (the intended participants for this research), this group were considered to be suitable and credible participants to contribute relevant and justifiable data. Whilst almost all the participants fell into this group they were not all Art Historians or long-term museum professionals. Both those with and without substantial professional, academic, topical or experiential knowledge of art galleries and paintings were able to contribute comparable information and insight. As with the preceding methods employed in this research, the data was correlated and analysed for presenting the outcomes, themes, concepts and the use of vocabulary in a concise and comprehensive manner.

The aim of this multi-methodology was to assess the art gallery visitor experience, particularly the occurrence of affective and emotive elements. The data and analysis would provide a deeper insight into the role of mental health and well-being in the experience of visitors to cultural organisations, particularly art galleries. From this it would be possible to re-consider approaches to evaluation in Museum Visitor Studies, including the collection and analysis of personal experiential narratives and linguistic expression. This has been supplemented by an auto-ethnography of my own experiences for contextualised comprehension, accounts of which feature in linked appendices and were originally presented in a Blog on the Internet.

Significance and Value

Coincidentally my research has proved very timely. When I initially became interested in this area of research, the inherent disciplines (affect, emotion, mental

health and well-being) and their evaluation were not as prolific and prevalent in the cultural sector as they are at the time of writing this thesis. With the launch of the Government's National Wellbeing Index (Office for National Statistics, September 2010, November 2012, September 2013), the Happy Museum Project (website, n.d.) and AHRC's 'The Cultural Value Project' (AHRC, 2013) – my own research is embedded within an important and significant sphere of enterprise. At a time of international economic crisis – and in an ever-changing socio-cultural, technological sphere – the value, significance and impact of experience is of paramount interest. The mental health and well-being of the nation, and the world, is being addressed in diverse and expansive ways – particularly with the continuing dissolution of economical and ecological certainty. Cultural and governmental bodies are looking for other ways to encourage and assess mental health and well-being, with museums and galleries being promoted within their own sector as a resource to assist in this goal. The cultural sector evidentially plays a significant role within society. This was demonstrated in the DCMS 'Taking Part Survey', which documented that 52.1% of adults visited a museum or gallery in 2012 (DCMS, 2013), exceeding previous records. It is therefore important to carry out research to assess this practice and assist in its future development.

Summary

This thesis will chart a dynamic exploration of defining and evaluating the experience of engaging with paintings in the art gallery through a thorough and in-depth approach to Museum Visitor Studies and Social Science research. With a particular emphasis on the affective and emotional entities of experience, my research will be embedded within the wider discourse of the role of cultural organisations in the promotion of positive mental health and well-being. The thesis will also identify the role of paintings as *memento mori* and *memento vitae* in the broader context of our lives through the implementation of memory. Using Narrative Research and 'messy method' as the theoretical framework for substantiating the research process, experiential narratives will be created and collected to define the affective and emotionally engaged experience and the impact on mental health and well-being. This will be achieved through a multi-

methodological approach and a rigorous analysis of data. Whilst it is hoped that my research will achieve significant outcomes in its own right it is also intended to provide a foundation for future development and research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction: a literary foundation

Due to the multiplicity of subject areas included in this research the Literature Review is based on an expansive interdisciplinary foundation, including: Aesthetics, Educational Theory, History, Art History, Museology, (Museum) Visitor Studies, Philosophy, and Psychology. Each of these disciplines is integral to the hierarchical presentation of the literature based on the themes and theories that most inform my thesis. These have been categorised in the Literature Review under three sub-headings dedicated to the affective power of paintings; well-being; and the museum visitor experience, respectively.

Based on my own knowledge and experience, and the limited parameters of a thesis, it would be difficult to account for all the complexities and disparities within each field. Therefore this Literature Review is a general overview of the areas related to my research, highlighting the concepts that are of most significance and relevance. It is intended to provide an adequate foundation for general comprehensibility of the research focus.

LITERATURE REVIEW: THE AFFECTIVE POWER OF PAINTINGS AND THE ART GALLERY

Introduction

The crux of my thesis is the affective power of paintings, based on a well-established foundation of Aesthetics and art appreciation. This is applied to research of the affective and emotive experiences had by visitors when engaging with paintings in the art gallery, and the role of these experiences within the wider context of mental health and well-being. Within the available literature of Aesthetics it is possible to locate theory representative of the long-standing interest in the engagement with the visual world and paintings, as well as a demonstration of the much-contested 'aesthetic experience'. While acknowledging

the historic roots of Aesthetics my research dismisses the ambition of a universal aesthetic as elitist framed within the perception of taste and beauty as most evidentially instigated in the 18th century. Instead I embrace the much broader and accessible aesthetic appreciation and subjective engagement with paintings of the 21st century.

The concept of Aesthetics harks back to antiquity, since when this malleable and transient paradigm has made a meandering path through history, perpetually being defined and redefined. Its origins are evident in the Ancient writings of Plato and Aristotle (Cahn and Meskin, 2007; Gaut and Lopes, 2013; Hofstadter, 1976; Lawson-Tancred, 1998), whilst the term itself was coined by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten in 1735. Baumgarten's development of the term 'aesthetic' was based on the Greek *aisthetikos*, meaning sensation (Giovannelli (Ed.), 2012). This definition initiated a shift to the emphasis of beauty and the aesthetic being experienced through the senses rather than through the visually and cognitively perceived formal qualities within an external artwork or entity. The 'aesthetic' came to be an encapsulation of all the senses into affective and emotional encounters with the world, generating early claims to the 'embodiment' of visual engagement. Embodiment (Csordas, 1994; Tschacher and Tröndle, 2011) is a philosophical and psychological term that defines the sensorial experience of the external world appreciated through the physical body of the human being and the body's relation to the cognitive perception of this experience. Embodiment is an integral facet of lived experience.

The 18th century saw other developments of Aesthetics and theories of aesthetic experience, particularly by renowned philosophers such as Immanuel Kant (Giovannelli (Ed.), 2012; Kant, 1764, 1790). The separatist Cartesian dualism as defined by René Descartes in the 17th century – in which the mind and the body had previously been conceptualised as separate entities – was reconciled by Kant to provide a more direct relational theorem (Descartes in Cottingham and Williams, 1996). This conjoined intellectual processes and embodiment to produce an entwined, intertextual cognitive and physical experience. Despite this valid contribution to current interpretation of aesthetic experience, the 18th century was

too confined by its self-imposed strictures of 'universality', elitism and defined constructions of taste and beauty.

Following the cultivation of the philosophy from the 18th century, aesthetic experience has continued to be presented as an elitist phenomena since this time, even if inadvertently. Heightened knowledge and understanding is often considered essential for having an aesthetic experience (Bennett et al, 2008; Bourdieu and Darbel, 1991; Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson, 1990). This is again particularly true of the paradigm of the hegemonic instigation of 'beauty' and its appreciation (Armstrong, 2001, 2005; Eco, 2008; Scruton, 2009). The paramount criteria of a defined and cultured sense of taste has continued to be considered crucial for painting to be fully appreciated and 'experienced', particularly in the Modernist tradition of Roger Fry (1961), Clive Bell (1958) and Clement Greenberg (1973; Greenberg in Battcock, 1966), who revered the Formalist construction of composition, line and colour.

Dissolution of the prevalent elitist perception of aesthetic experience can be found within contemporary literature and through my research. This re-interpretation asserts that everyone can have an aesthetic experience when engaging with paintings based on their own subjective knowledge and perception of the world. The previously held doctrine of canons of beauty and taste being associated with 'universal' elitist cultivation and appreciation is replaced by more accessible and expansive subjective variability through direct affectivity, emotion and embodied engagement. The intellectual emphasis becomes visceral. It is in the writings of James Elkins (2000, 2001, 2006, 2008, 2010) that my research locates the most influential source of contemporary theory based on this affective and subjective experience in the face of paintings. This is supplemented by the scientific substantiation provided by various research projects and disciplines, such as the Neuroaesthetics of Semir Zeki (1999, 2009; Ishizu and Zeki, 2011).

Through the functional manifestation of communication and evocation, paintings are saturated with an affective and emotive quality. In the words of Ernst Gombrich, the earliest known paintings contained an inherent power – a 'power of

picture making' and a 'power of images' (Gombrich, 2000: 42) – that has continued to exist since that time. This chimes with the subsequent doctrine of David Freedberg, who developed his thesis on the role of paintings based on the premise of the affective 'charge' – the integral element of an image that harnesses it with 'power' (Freedberg, 1991). The entirety of this chapter is dedicated to the affective and emotive power of paintings, with particular reference to contemporary literature. Individual sections focus on the influence of the theory of Elkins; the substantiation made by scientific practice; the emotive and therapeutic potential of paintings; and the value of the affective experience in culture and the arts.

Elkinian Affectivity of Paintings and the Art Gallery

I was moved. I laughed out loud, I swallowed hard on a lump in my throat, I welled up and I felt a sense of belonging that I can't ever recall feeling in a museum or gallery.

(Heal, 2013)

There is identifiable evidence of the affectivity of paintings and the art gallery, as well as cultural organisations and collections more generally. A highly demonstrative example of the affectivity of engaging with paintings directly related to my research is found in the theory of Elkins – hence the use of the overarching term in this chapter of 'Elkinian affectivity'.⁴ This renowned art historian highlights the emotive outcomes and physiological reaction of the individual when engaging with paintings, particularly through the tangibility of tears. *Pictures and Tears: A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings* (2001) provides an evidential account of emotional response, where tears become the physical 'data' for 'evaluating' affect. Whilst reading the text it becomes hard to deny the provocative and emotive affect of paintings, caused by communication between an inherent quality of the paintings and self-projection of the individual. To explore where this emotive affect stems from Elkins produces a correlation of people's first hand experiences as expressed through letters he received in pursuit

⁴ 'Elkinian affectivity' is my own term that was created to define the pronounced affectivity of painting as demonstrated in the research and literature of James Elkins (2000, 2001, 2006, 2008, 2010).

of such encounters and the author's personal exploration (auto-ethnography) of these types of experience. This technique makes use of experiential narratives as a methodological approach as adopted in my own research. The entirety of Elkins' text provides a testimony to the phenomena of the power (Gombrich, 2000: 42) and affective charge (Freedberg, 1991) of paintings. It also represents how the elements of experiences of paintings and the art gallery are interrelated and difficult to isolate for the purposes of coherent definition.

Elkins consolidates his findings of an affective and emotional response to paintings by providing three reasons that could be the catalyst for such a reaction. These three factors are time; religion (or the sacred in a secular sense); or a painful absence of something sacred or spiritual, an absence of God for some. This combines experiential themes associated with paintings, particularly spirituality – providing a corroborated conjunction of affectivity, emotion and spirituality that are integral to mental health and well-being. Using a journey through different artists, from Mark Rothko (the resounding and reflective figure throughout the text) to Giovanni Bellini (Elkins' own emotive nemesis), Elkins attempts to validate this formula for the provocation of tears.

Time is the first of these deductions, which Elkins explores through various abstractions. He believes that people are affected by the immortalisation of paintings in the face of the viewer's own mortality, particularly when the paintings represent human figures. A painting can also provide a static frame of time capturing a contrasted emotion to the viewer's own, inducing sadness in the face of a perceived happiness. Other viewers find the dislocation between themselves and something in the painting unsettling, or even a dislocation of temporal references – as one of Elkins contributors discovered affected them in Vincent Van Gogh's *Olive Trees* (1889). On close inspection it becomes apparent that the shadows from the trees in this painting are not in relation to the light shining from the sun.

The second element that could cause an emotive reaction is of a religious, or secularly sacred, nature. Elkins was hesitant to delve into this area as he acknowledged its controversial character but believed it could not be avoided,

especially due to the religious ancestry of paintings. Even the indeterminacy of whether Rothko's own work is essentially religious is addressed, with particular reference to his canvases housed in a non-denominational chapel in Houston, since known as the Rothko Chapel (De Menil, 2010). Whether a painting provides obvious religious content and iconography, or provides spiritual impact through an element such as nature, it demonstrates the potential to become a 'simulacrum' of God, or a secularly spiritual alternative (Elkins, 2001). The presence of something sacred and spiritual seems to stem from an individual connection with a painting consisting of a combined triadic basis of artistic execution, subject and the individual viewer's own contextual history. This spiritual presence represents God for some but when denominational parameters of religion are put aside it can provide all viewers with a moving experience and the feeling of a presence. As the art historian Bertrand Rougé explains to Elkins, 'the etymological meaning of the word "religion" is "connection" (from the Latin *religere*), and so if a picture makes [the viewer] feel at home, or if [they] feel somehow part of the picture, that conviction is religious in the original sense of the word' (Elkins, 2001: 180). It is this empathetic connection that affects the viewer, instilling emotion and producing tears.

The third element that could provoke tears when viewing a painting is the blatant absence of this spiritual or religious presence. The viewer is then prone to cry from sadness, either for their own loneliness or for the provocation of being presented with a disturbingly unsettling and empty image. The pathos of such an image can provoke a humanised empathy through the recollection of familiarised feelings of sadness. Perceived absence could also mirror the dissolution of religion in modernity, which produces a feeling of dislocation from the communality provided by faith. This 'disenchantment' is considered to have created a lack of emotional engagement and mysticism in the West as described by Max Weber (2001, originally 1904/1905), who borrowed the term from Friedrich Schiller (1967, originally 1794). Elkins' three criteria for inducing a tearful reaction to a painting are also relevant to affective and emotively engaged experiences even when tears are not produced.

Within the signification of these emotive mechanisms Elkins provides a list of some of the terms used to explain responses to paintings within 20th century art criticism:

Empathy: an unwanted, uncontrollable flow of emotions that merges the viewer and the viewed.

The numinous: the frightening, intimate, overwhelming presence of the sacred.

The aura: the gleam of unique objects, before we were jaded by photographs and reproductions.

The uncanny: Freud's idea of the creeping feeling that something is ghostly, and yet deeply familiar.

The enigma: for Giorgio de Chirico, the incomprehensible aroma of place.

The abject: an object that has no proper place in the world because it is both a waste product and part of us.

(Elkins, 2001: 180)

An adaptation of these terms are adopted by my research, as they are relevant as terms but also too specific, finite and structured as definitions. For example, I would not perceive 'empathy' as always 'unwanted' or 'uncontrollable'.

The art historical terms for experience of paintings set out by Elkins are similar to the mutually contemporaneous thematic elements of aesthetic experience determined by John Armstrong, such as 'contemplation' and 'reverie' (Armstrong, 2001). Armstrong investigates the subjectivity of engaging with particular artworks based on the personification, or anthropomorphisation, of art created by the viewer's 'affection' for the entity they behold. This affection holds two important criteria when related to art, which are 'magnetism – the force of fascination' and 'intimacy – the sense of being engaged in an especially personal and private way' (Armstrong 2001: 3). The sense of engagement and connection could occur through the recognition of the 'everyday' entities of our lived experience (Tam, 2006). These terms are encompassed by my research to

substantiate and inform the investigation and evaluation of the affective and emotionally engaged experience.

Elkins' emphasis on the humanistic empathy created by the process of engaging with paintings is an integral aspect of my research and the process of embodiment. One of the methods used by the artist to create an affective experience for the viewer is through capturing emotions within the artwork, invoking empathetic emotive response – as evident in the religious imagery of the 14th century. This practice provides a sense of empathy in the viewer from recognisable traits that might invoke in them a similarly emotive reaction through embodied affectivity. There is little literature dedicated to capturing emotions within painting in order to situate this aspect of the review (e.g. Schaefer and Henning, 2008). However, Elkins (2010) has provided a succinct expression of the empathetic affectivity created by the emotion displayed within a painting. Whilst he is referring specifically to a religious painting (Figure 2, p. 42)⁵, the execution and appreciation of this emotion could be applicable to paintings more generally and to the embodied engaged experience:

The closely cropped half-length portraits, sometimes called "devotional images" (in German, *Andachtsbilder*) must have moved many people to tears. There was a new doctrine in the air, enjoining worshippers to do more than just sympathize with Jesus or Mary: the aim of prayer was to identify with them bodily, to try to think of yourself as Jesus, or as the Mother of God. You would look at such an image steadily, sometimes for hours or days on end, burrowing deeper and deeper into the mind of the Savior or the Virgin. Finally you would come to feel what they had felt, and you would see the world, at least in some small part, through their eyes. At that point their tears would be your tears. In the medieval doctrine, you would be crying "compunctive" tears: God's tears at our sins, given back to God.

(Elkins, 2010)

⁵ Full details for this illustration can be found in Appendix 1, p. 309.



Figure 2
Mater Dolorosa (Sorrowing Virgin)
c. 1480/1500
Workshop of Dieric Bouts
The Art Institute of Chicago

Elkins' quote on the empathetic and embodied affectivity of religious paintings emphasises the wider association of spirituality and art (Gablik, 1994; Gamwell, 2002; Kandinsky, 2006; Elkins, 2007; De Menil et al, 2010; Yoon, 2010; Stoker, 2012). These spiritual experiences related to the original interpretation of 'religion' (Rougé in Elkins, 2001: 180) provide a connection between painting and viewer through elements such as empathy, affection, fascination and intimacy (Armstrong, 2001; Elkins, 2001). This religious and spiritual experience endorses the art gallery with the status of a 'secular cathedral' (Culture: Unlimited, 2008; de Botton, 2011 and 2013; Duncan, 1995) where visitors go to have a transformative and meaningful experience.

Despite the contemporaneous nature of the aforementioned theory – and the recent surge in focus on affective, emotive and visceral experience – the concept has established historical origins. The theory of Stendhal Syndrome is one of the earliest recorded and most renowned examples of distinct affectivity caused through engagement with culture. In the 19th century Henri-Marie Beyle, a French

author who wrote using Stendhal as a 'nom de plume', composed an account of an affective encounter he had on a visit to the Basilica of Santa Croce in Florence in 1817. Despite being a Christian building, Stendhal's account does not directly make any suggestions of a specifically religious experience and thus adopts the original definition of religion as a process of connection (Rougé in Elkins, 2001: 180). The spiritual and sublime are also integral elements of the experience:

My soul, affected by the very notion of being in Florence, and by the proximity of those great men whose tombs I had just beheld, was already in a state of trance. Absorbed in the contemplation of *sublime beauty*, I could perceive its very essence close at hand; I could as it were, feel the stuff of it beneath my fingertips. I had attained to that supreme degree of sensibility where the *divine intimations* of art merge with the impassioned sensuality of emotion. As I emerged from the porch of *Santa Croce*, I was seized with a fierce palpitation of the heart (that same symptom which, in Berlin, is referred to as an *attack of nerves*); the well-spring of life was dried up within me, and I walked in constant fear of falling to the ground.

(Stendhal, 1817: 302)

This is an anecdotal account of an extraordinary affective encounter created through engagement with art. The affective encounter with Italian culture was similarly described in the 18th century accounts of Goethe (1816). Despite the historical and individualistic nature of these accounts, similar incidents of varying degrees of affective encounter have since been recorded. Graziella Magherini wrote a book in 1989 entitled *Stendhal Syndrome* inspired by Stendhal's experience, whilst conceiving the use of this term to describe these affective encounters (Guy, 2003). As a doctor, Magherini began to discover pathological phenomena in some of her patients who were visitors to Florence experiencing psychosomatic symptoms from indulging in the cultural offerings of the city, including the art.

Scientific and Psychological Substantiation

Stendhal Syndrome has been further emphasised in a study carried out by

researchers at the Palazzo Medici Riccardi in Florence in 2010. Scientists monitored heartbeat, blood pressure and the rate of breathing as visitors engaged with the frescoes in the Palazzo (Jones, 2010; Squires, 2010). Subsequently these visitors were asked to write down the impressions of what they saw and how they felt physically and emotionally. This provides an example of how language and self-defined narrative is of paramount importance in the evaluation and assessment of visitor experience, even with the use of scientific instruments. The research was covered in the British media who described the syndrome as ‘a psychosomatic illness that causes rapid heartbeat, fainting, confusion and even hallucinations in people who are exposed to extraordinary artistic achievement, whether it is paintings or sculptures’ (Squires, 2010).

The use of scientific equipment to assess the affectivity of paintings and art galleries is also evident in the ‘eMotion: mapping museum experience’ project that was carried out at the Kunstmuseum (Art Museum), St Gallen, Switzerland by the Institute for Research in Art and Design, University of Applied Science Northwestern Switzerland, Academy of Art and Design (CH). The project was an ‘investigation of the psychogeographical effect [sic] of the museum on the museum visitor’ (eMotion website, n.d.). There was an emphasis in this research on the ‘art-affected state’ of visitors – ‘a sense of immersion in an artwork, or of feeling addressed by it’ (Tröndle in Spears, 2012). This state was the focus of an inquiry into how engaging with art in the physical environment was emotionally affective. A ‘dataglove’ was used to collect data to produce an ‘experience map’ for each participant in this research project, which was ‘a graphic representation of his art perception’ (eMotion website, n.d.).⁶ This provided a visualisation of the experience of the visitor to the exhibition and the affective impact of engagement, including data about the heart rate and ‘galvanic skin response’ (a change in the electrical resistance of the skin which happens during moments of strong emotion).

Neuroaesthetics is another example of the scientific substantiation of the affective

⁶ Examples of maps from the ‘eMotion research project:
<http://www.mapping-museum-experience.com/en/results/artistic> [Last accessed: 14th November 2013.]

and emotional experience of engaging with the arts, including paintings. This relatively recent field – that provides a convergence of Aesthetics, Psychology and Neuroscience – was initially developed in the late 20th century by the pioneering Zeki and has increased in momentum ever since (Shimamura, 2013; Starr, 2013; Zeki, 1999, 2009). Whilst the discipline is in a comparably nascent state it has already produced some impressive research and literature, using brain scanning as a foundation for assessing aesthetic experience.

As with all brain studies, Zeki is the first to recognise certain limitations in the current scientific and cultural climate due to the indistinct relationship between alterations in the brain and identifying the exact reason for these outcomes. The discipline of Neuroaesthetics uses Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) to produce scans for studying the changes that take place in the brain when engaging with stimuli from the external world, including music and visual art. With this technology it is possible to scan the brain of an individual looking at a painting to determine particular neurological changes. However, it cannot determine exactly why this happened or how it relates to other physiological and psychological functions. Linguistic data is often used to supplement the scientific methodology, as in other scientific research projects (e.g. eMotion website, n.d.; Quiroga, Dudley and Binnie, 2011). Nevertheless, Neuroaesthetics is still a valuable contribution to understanding engagement with visual art:

All visual art is expressed through the brain and must therefore obey the laws of the brain, whether in conception, execution or appreciation and no theory of aesthetics that is not substantially based on the activity of the brain is ever likely to be complete, let alone profound.

(Semir Zeki, 1999)

Given the complexities of the field, Neuroaesthetics is a useful scientific exploration of the visual brain, helping us better understand how what is perceived visually impacts the activity of the brain. For example, Zeki compares the affective impact that engaging with paintings can have on the brain to the

feeling of falling in love (Ishizu and Zeki, 2011; Mendick, 2011). MRI scans were used to scan the blood flow to the brain as participants looked at paintings. The participants were randomly selected but all had little knowledge of art so would not be overly influenced by informed perception or perceived 'taste'. The outcome was based on the conception of beauty as a subjective opinion of the participant proclaiming which paintings they found beautiful:

The blood flow increased for a beautiful painting just as it increases when you look at somebody you love. It tells us art induces a feel good sensation direct to the brain.

(Zeki in Mendick, 2011)

This field of research and the related literature demonstrates that engaging with paintings has an affective impact on the viewer and is conducive to well-being, even if we are unable to decipher exactly the definitive cause. Whilst I will not be using scientific methods in my own research these scientific practices and the field of Neuroaesthetics provide robust argument that visual engagement does affect the brain and thus arguably the mental health and well-being of visitors to art galleries. The use of language and anecdotal descriptions of engagement that are required to make sense of scientific findings also situates methodological use of experiential narratives as a credible methodology.

The Emotive and Therapeutic Potential of Paintings

The affectivity of paintings is contributed to by the emotions they elicit through subjective engagement, which provides these artworks with the potential to be used as a therapeutic device. Paintings have been identified for these emotive capabilities throughout history, including during the strictures of Formalism in the mid-20th century. In *Art* (1958), originally published in 1914, Bell charted his pursuit of identifying the mutual component shared by all works of art that differentiated them from all other objects whilst eliciting 'aesthetic emotions' through an appreciation of 'significant form'. To Bell the combination of the components of line and colour create an esteemed visual image of significant form

that is the catalyst for an affective, emotive and engaged encounter:

In each, lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions. These relations and combinations of lines and colours, these aesthetically moving forms, I call "Significant Forms"; and "Significant Form" is the one quality common to all works of visual art.

(Bell, 1958: 17-18)

Although Bell elevates the importance of affective and visceral engagement with paintings, he has a very confined perception of which paintings have significant form and are hence 'works of art', based within the strictures of Formalism. Paintings of renown are dismissed by Bell as 'Descriptive Paintings' rather than 'works of art', which could not have an aesthetic impact as 'forms are used not as objects of emotion, but as means of suggesting emotion or conveying information'. This perpetuates an ingrained fallacy that only certain works of art provoke aesthetic emotions, based here on particular use of line and colour, as well as through the process of imposed judgement. Bell was defending 'modern' works, and post-impressionism specifically, in the face of the burgeoning presence of contemporary art. Nevertheless the strict and specific criteria for painting embedded within the Formalist movement exacerbated the elitist perception of the definition of 'good' art and restricted the interpretation and accessibility of aesthetic experience. This perspective rejects the subjectivity of affectively engaged encounters as directed by the individual – the integral core of my research. Whilst I adhere to the concept of 'aesthetic emotions' I also adopt an expansion of the use of 'significant form' to include any painting that has an affective and emotive impact on the viewer, traversing the rigid and limiting boundaries of Formalism.

Another example of the influence of Formalism on the 21st century interpretation of affective and emotive experience is evident in the assertion of the uniqueness of the media. Greenberg promoted the importance of exercising the specificity of artistic media, which in painting was the uniqueness of 'flatness' (Greenberg in

Battcock, 1966: 67-69). According to Greenberg 'the essence of Modernism' lay in 'the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticise the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence' (Greenberg in Battcock, 1966: 67). For a Modernist painting to be valued as a significant and commendable work of art there was a requirement to exploit its idiosyncronicity of flatness through a skilful use of line, colour and form. This flatness was its 'limiting condition' that stood it apart from any other art form and assured the criteria of 'aesthetic quality'. Although the creation and appreciation of paintings has developed since Greenberg's time, the flatness and non-dimensionalisation of paintings beyond Modernism provides a medium for dialogical encounter. The process of engagement and the painting itself can be enlivened through experiential devices such as: interaction (Rancière, 2009), imagination (Fry, 1961) and memory (Fernyhough, 2013; Gingeras, 2005; Kavanagh, 2000; Rivera-Oracca, 2009). The limiting condition of paintings has the potential to provide unlimited, diverse subjective experiences through mutability of creation, function and interpretation.

The role of aesthetic emotions is intrinsic to the affectivity of engaging with paintings, which can lead to therapeutic outcomes. An important endorsement of the therapeutic benefit of paintings is demonstrated by the organisation 'Paintings in Hospitals'. This organisation was 'established in 1959 with the mission to relieve sickness, anxiety and stress through the provision of art in hospitals, hospices and other healthcare facilities, across the UK, for the benefit of patients, their visitors and staff' (Painting in Hospitals website, n.d.). 'Paintings in Hospitals' cites specific research carried out at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital between 1999 and 2002 to substantiate their mission. 'A Study of the Effects of Visual and Performing Arts in Healthcare' (Staircoff et al, 2001) uses evidence to ascertain key benefits of displaying original artworks within a hospital environment. One such benefit in some patients was the 'reduction in levels of anxiety, stress and depression' (Staircoff et al, 2001). Subsequently, the Department of Health produced two papers in which Paintings in Hospitals was recognised for its significant work (Department of Health, 2007; Department of Health and Arts Council, 2007).

There has been subsequent in-depth assessment of the impact of paintings executed in hospitals in Scotland (Cusack, Lankston and Isles, 2010; Lankston et al 2010). Two research projects have approached the visual impact of paintings in waiting rooms and in hospital spaces more generally, concluding that the affect is 'not only on patient wellbeing but also on health outcomes such as length of stay in hospital and pain tolerance' (Lankston et al, 2010: 490). This research asserted that the affect and impact of visual art in medical settings is associated with Attention Restoration Theory (ART) (Kaplan, Bardwell and Slakter, 1993; Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989; Ratcliffe, 2012) and its relation to nature, with particular beneficial emphasis on the display of imagery of landscapes and the natural world. ART was originally developed in relation to nature by Rachel and Stephen Kaplan in the 1980s (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989) and was based on the 'relaxing' impact of the natural physical world. It has since been resurrected (Ratcliffe, 2012) and also applied to the environment of museums (Kaplan, Bardwell and Slakter, 1993). The concept of ART is based on the premise that immersing oneself in non-confrontational surroundings, or engaging with related visual imagery, could create therapeutic and remedial impact. It is the encompassing sensorial components of objects, entities and environments that create a restorative affect, 'improving mood or attention after stress or fatigue' (Ratcliffe, 2012).

The Value of Affective Experience in Culture and the Arts

Research, evaluation and comprehension of the subjective experience of cultural offerings in the United Kingdom has been increasingly prevalent in the 21st century. Perhaps influenced by escalating funding and budget cuts, there has been wider research into the quality of visitor experiences and the value of the arts in society. This is a collective amalgamation of the previous cultural research foci, such as: learning, impact and experiential outcomes. For example, a discussion paper has been produced for the Contemporary Visual Arts Network, funded by Arts Council England, to evaluate the 'quality of experience' for visitors/participants in the visual arts across England (Annabel Jackson Associates Ltd, 2012). The depth and expanse of this research promises to give a more comprehensive and detailed view of the quality of visitor experience in England

than has previously been carried out, accommodating and emphasising a holistically-defined experience.

Another research project currently being carried out (at the time of writing) by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the 'Cultural Value Project', aims to assess the value of the arts in Britain through providing funding for research and by organising an accompanying programme of informative workshops and publications. The project seeks to provide 'a framework that will advance the ways in which we define and think about the value of cultural engagement as well as the methods by which we evaluate it' (Arts and Humanities Research Council, 2013). Whilst my own research is not directly related to that of the AHRC, its beginnings temporally preceded this national research project and it is situated within the significant realm of the value of the arts. I am making a significant contribution to this field through investigating and affirming the affective and emotive visitor experience to the art gallery as associated with mental health and well-being.

Focus on the value of engaging with the arts is not only a British phenomenon in the 21st century but is prolifically visible across the globe, as seen in a paper published by the President's Committee on Arts and Humanities (PCAH) in the United States of America. 'Reinvesting in Arts Education: Winning America's Future Through Creative Schools' (May 2011) endeavours to 'ensure that all children have access to great works of art at museums', amongst other priorities for cultural and arts education (Obama quoted in Dwyer, 2011:4). Michele Obama, the Honorary Chair of the PCAH, spearheaded the campaign to ignite an interest in the importance of arts education and the use of cultural organisations as a valuable resource for learning and wider experiential outcomes. Whilst this paper is based on formal education of schools it highlights the encompassing value of the practice of, and engagement with, the arts across all sectors of society in different parts of the world. A defining assertion in this paper related to my own research is the following claim:

The brain prioritizes emotionally-tinged information (again, a possible additional advantage for learning through music or theater, for example) for conversion to long-term memory.

(Dwyer, 2011: 3)

Based on this declaration the affective and emotionally engaged experience of visiting the art gallery could provide a memorability that would impact the lives of visitors in a substantive and accumulative capacity. This claim also asserts the potency formed by any emotional experience for producing more substantial impact, whilst signifying a connection between the intellectual, emotional and memory.

Summary

There is an evident demonstration in the associated literature and research of the importance of culture and the arts, paintings and the art gallery, in providing valuable affective and emotive experiences. This includes direct examples of how engaging with paintings is conducive to mental health and well-being. The painting is a reflective, reactive resource for viewer experience, based on experiential and cognitive knowledge. It provides an affective charge (Freedberg, 1991) and produces an 'art-affected state' (Tröndle in Spears, 2012) that can be emotive, restorative and therapeutic. This affectivity is based on Elkins' concepts of time, 'religion' and an absence of 'spiritual' connection (Elkins, 2001); affection and love (Armstrong, 2001; Elkins, 2010; Ishizu and Zeki, 2011); 'emotionally-tinged' experience (Dwyer, 2011: 3); and the association with memory and lived experience. The art gallery has been claimed as a secular cathedral (Culture: Unlimited, 2008; de Botton, 2011 and 2013; Duncan, 1995); restorative environment (Falk and Dierking, 2012; Kaplan, Bardwell and Slakter, 1993) and even a 'healing space' (Fears, 2009). This is complemented by the current emphasis on 'The Emotional Museum', 'The Therapeutic Museum' (Museums Association Conference, 2013) and the 'happy museum' (Happy Museum Project website, n.d.).

The 21st century aesthetic experience is perceived as something that has an impact 'not by pleasing the eye only, but by conveying meanings and values which have weight' (Scruton, 2009: 9) for the visitor through the connection (*religere*) (Rougé in Elkins, 2001: 180) made when engaging with paintings in the art gallery environment. This provides an assimilation of the visual and visceral, embodied experience whilst situating the painting as a resource for projecting and experiencing memories of our own lives – becoming a *memento vitae* and *memento mori*. Through dismissing the strictures of the 18th century universal doctrines of taste and beauty, and by adopting the contemporary literature and research on the affective experience of engaging with paintings and art galleries, I am able to substantiate the importance of this phenomenon. It is a meaningful and transformative experience.

A quality experience is one that arouses the emotions, that creates high attention and an altered emotional state. The emotional reaction could be positive or negative, high energy or low energy, comfortable or uncomfortable. A single artwork could arouse similar emotions in the audience, or wildly different reactions. The emotions aroused could be familiar to the audience member or rare, emotions that the audience member seeks, or not. They could be life affirming or challenging.

(Annabel Jackson Associates, 2012: 21)

LITERATURE REVIEW: WELL-BEING

Introduction

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

(World Health Organisation, 1948)

The concepts of mental health and well-being have been present since Antiquity, particularly in the doctrines of Plato, Aristotle and the Ancient Greek pursuit of the

'Good Life'. In the ancient philosophical sphere, the concept of mental health is deemed to originate with Plato, who explored and endorsed such theories (Seeskin, 2008). According to etymological records, the first surviving recorded written use of the word 'well-being' has its origins in 1610 – documented as a conjunction of the adjective 'well' and the gerundive of 'to be', literally 'to be well' (Bergdolt, 2008). There does not seem to be a similar record for 'mental health' but throughout history both these concepts and their respective linguistic manifestations have been synonymous with each other, yet also terms in their own right. Mental health is the overarching term for the health of the cognitive and psychological faculties of an individual; it is a general term that also encompasses more specific conditions such as depression, schizophrenia and anxiety. The positive mental health of an individual is an integral component conducive to overall well-being, which includes physical health and contributing external factors to the experience of human life. It is implicit that if you have stable mental health you are more likely to have a positive sense of emotional well-being.

This section of the Literature Review will focus on the concept of the 'Good Life' and how its origins in Antiquity relate to contemporary principles of mental health and well-being in the 21st century. This is seen in current governmental and cultural agendas that inform and affect sports, culture and social life. It is striving for the 'Good Life' that leads individuals to seek and value affective and emotive experiences, as well as the desire to expand comprehension and cultivation of them. This summary is not exhaustive but will provide a concise account through focus on the history of mental health and well-being to the present day; the cultural and museological approach to mental health and well-being; and the roles of distraction and immersion in the pursuit of well-being. It is hoped that the following account will provide sufficient information to help the reader engage with the subsequent text in a suitably informed way.

History of Mental Health and Well-being

The fundamental foundation for mental health and well-being in Antiquity was the pursuit of certain principles to achieve the 'Good Life', which continues to exist in

the present day. Through a brief historical summary and critique of mental health and well-being, as informed by Klaus Bergdolt (2008), it is possible to identify the origins of mental health and well-being demonstrated through the development of different cultural and historical discourses on health.

Ancient Greece and Rome adopted the spiritual and religious associations with health and well-being that were initially present in Ancient Egypt, Babylon and Persia. The physical, psychological and spiritual were then brought together as good health and recovery became increasingly based on a positive mental state embedded within a wider general metaphysical and ontological context. Doctors were elevated to a god-like status and some gods, such as Apollo, were directly associated with medicine and healing. Whilst there were various approaches to health and the healing professions (such as prayer, philosopher doctors, magical practices, practical physicians and faith healers) there was an agreed ideology of the healthy Greek, based on the physical, mental and spiritual, resulting in the Good Life:

The healthy Greek is characterized by norm, mean, temperance, social integration in family and state, progeny, contentedness, normal bodily functions and the greatest possible mental alertness.

(Bergdolt, 2008: 15)

In this definition lie the beginnings of the latter theory of Cartesian dualism between body and mind (Descartes in Cottingham and Williams, 1996), with life being dedicated to attaining a perfect harmony of the two. Whilst the separatist perspective of the Cartesian doctrine was eventually dismissed, this harmony of body and mind prevailed, where '[h]olistic and mechanistic concepts complement one another... whose perfection is understood as an expression of the divine order of things' (Bergdolt, 2008: 21).

The increased production of health publications in Ancient Greece from c. 500BC, such as the *Hippocratic Corpus* (c. 500-430BC), demonstrate an enhanced focus on

external physical and tangible components being more conclusively considered as having an impact on physical health and general well-being. This included diet, physical activity, the surrounding environment and climate. The philosophy was adopted by politicians and philosophers who encouraged practices such as physical activity and socialising to promote the general health and well-being of the state, as still recognised as on-going components for general well-being and the Good Life. Another notion covered in these texts was the healing power of nature through its physical and aesthetic benefits. This situates Attention Restoration Theory (ART) (Kaplan, Bardwell and Slakter, 1993; Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989; Ratcliffe, 2012) within a more expansive historicised context. The surrounding environment in general was considered important for health and well-being, including: general hygiene, weather and the use of baths as particularly popularised in Ancient Rome. At this time the concerns of health and well-being came to be based on the whole person within the context of, and influenced by, their environment and the entities within it.

During the Renaissance a humanist approach to health and well-being was adopted. Petrarch conceived that the ideal way of life was dependent on solitude and contemplation (Kirkham and Maggi, 2012). Others, such as Leon Battista Alberti, believed it was essential to combine public activity with private retreat. Alberti also believed the architectural environment to be conducive to well-being, as is evident through his buildings (Bergdolt, 2008: 161). During this time, particularly in Italy, there was a debate between pursuing the active life in society (*vita activa*) or retreating to contemplation and writing (*vita contemplative*) (Tavernor, 1998: 192). In fact it would be a balanced combination of both approaches that would prevail and is evident in the art gallery visitor experience today. The concept of an idyllic environment for peace and well-being was also evident through the Renaissance adoption of the mythological principle of 'arcadia', which was based on the natural outdoor environment but can include any setting that provides a restorative environment. Thus the art gallery could become arcadia.

The 19th century brought the development of asylums, caused by the introduction

of the 1808 County Asylums Act (Bergdolt, 2008). Following the prolific programme of the establishment of these asylums it was realised that support was needed for patients coming back into the community. The first mental health organisation to be developed in order to provide this support was The Mental After-care Association (MACA) in 1879. In a testimony to the success and importance of such organisations many others followed (e.g. Mind, 1946; Mental Health Foundation, 1949). Social healthcare was becoming a more significant national and governmental priority during the mid-20th century, with the National Health Service being founded in 1946 (Webster, 2002).

In 1957 the Percy Commission (Percy Commission, 1957; Grounds, 2001) provided dissolution of the involuntary incarceration of all people with psychiatric illnesses. This was the catalyst for a major transition to a more community-focussed approach to mental health and well-being in recent times. Those with mental health conditions went from primarily being institutionalised to an increase in community-based care, which meant that in practice fewer people were hospitalised with mental health conditions. There was also evident progression of care and responsibility by the social services. This transition was made possible through the further development of dedicated facilities and support organisations. 'Therapeutic social clubs' (Mind website, n.d.) were introduced in the 1950s for the purpose of providing support for patients discharged from hospitals and could be seen as the forerunner of today's arts therapy and cultural mental health initiatives.

The Current Climate: Mental health and well-being from the late 20th century onwards

In the 20th and 21st centuries there have been attempts to define both mental health and well-being. One of the most recent definitions has been developed by the New Economics Foundation (nef):

Well-being is most usefully thought of as the dynamic process that gives people a sense of how their lives are going, through the interaction between their circumstances, activities and psychological resources or 'mental capital'.

(nef, 2009a)

The importance of the promotion and cultivation of well-being has increased since the mid-20th century when the World Health Organisation first circulated their international definition of mental health (WHO, 1948). Although the definition has not changed since this time it continues to promote the on-going importance of well-being, even though its usefulness is sometimes contested (Bergdolt, 2008; Saracci, 1997). Such definitions posit the notion that well-being is relative to the individual and their personal situation, as well as being contextually perceived. Despite the acknowledged difficulty of attempting to define such complex and fluid concepts, this terminology and its analysis at least provides a foundation to explore the mental health and well-being paradigms of the last two decades. Many principles harking back to Antiquity are still considered to be conducive to positive mental health and well-being in the 20th and 21st centuries. These can be seen informing the agendas and principles developed throughout the last twenty years, and arguably most actively from the late 1990s. It was the ancient principle of 'social integration' or 'inclusion' in particular that became the nucleus of a more directive and focussed progression of approaches to mental health and well-being, as well as the on-going pursuit of the Good Life. Despite these concepts having existed since Antiquity, the more recent governmental, societal and cultural pursuits are contemporaneously presented as an almost revelatory doctrine that should be adopted and developed.

Mental health and well-being has become increasingly prevalent in all contexts of society – not least of all the cultural sector, as apparent through the increased literature and practice dedicated to the subject. The exact reason for this emphasis is not obvious but there appear to be various contributing factors. The first of these is the introduction of a strong governmental mental health agenda that visibly emerged in 1997 through the introduction of the 'Social Exclusion Unit' by the

governing Labour party, under the leadership of Tony Blair. This venture situated social inclusion as the nucleus of the mental health and well-being agendas. The Social Exclusion Unit was designed to promote awareness of mental health issues, conditions and disabilities by encouraging inclusivity. These social inclusion agendas didn't just focus on mental health but on encouraging progression and equality across various demographics, including: age, race and gender – as also demonstrated in the inclusion and accessibility programmes of audience engagement in the cultural sector. The government's initial social inclusion agenda was followed with specific emphasis on mental health through the production of the 'National Service Framework for Mental Health' (Department of Health, 1999). The purpose of this subsequent strategy was to document and determine national standards for the mental health services – including aims, objectives, approaches and the measuring of outcomes. The related paper promoted the use of a combination of methods to 'strengthen individuals to enhance their psychological well-being' (Department of Health, 1999: 15). This became a catalyst for the production of further publications and frameworks, including ones focussed on the benefits of culture (DCMS, 2002; National Social Inclusion Programme, 2009; Social Inclusion Unit, 2004).

The early 21st century brought extensive shifts and developments in the mental health sector. This included the introduction of additional mental health organisations; a shift to patient led care (including development of web-based resources, such as NHS Choices as set up in 2007); and the devising of the Mental Health Act (2007, different in Wales). Alongside the Labour government's increased promotion of mental health and social inclusion in the late 1990s and early 21st century, museums realised their potential to provide engaging programmes to cater for and benefit various audiences, including those with mental health conditions. Practices based on well-being had been carried out in the 1990s by Tate Liverpool but it took longer to filter into the rest of the cultural sector more generally.

In response to the disbanding of The National Service Framework for Mental Health (established in 1999) in 2009, eleven leading mental health organisations

developed The Future Vision coalition (founded 2009, now disbanded).⁷ Following the establishment of this organisation various other governmental strategies and papers based on mental health and well-being were launched. The 2010 publication of 'New Horizons: Confident Communities, Brighter Futures: A framework for developing well-being' was deemed 'part of a continuing programme of action to improve the mental health and well-being of the whole population' (HM Government, March 2010). This signified another important transition where more gravity was given to the general mental health and well-being of the whole nation, rather than focusing solely on those who have diagnosed mental health conditions. This was followed by the dissemination of the current Coalition Government's (Conservative and Liberal Democrats) new mental health strategy, 'No health without mental health: a cross-Government mental health outcomes strategy for people of all ages' (HM Government, February 2011). Building on the former government's vision for increased prevention of mental health issues for all ages and support in recovery, the Coalition Government set out specific desired outcomes for mental health, assessed through 'measuring' against various 'national-level indicators'.

The current Coalition government has made other advances in the promotion of mental health agendas. This has included supporting the New Economics Foundation (nef) in producing 'National Accounts of Well-being' (January 2009) through their dedicated Centre for Well-being department; collaboratively initiating the campaign 'Time to Change', which confronts the stigma of mental health within the community (Time to Change, 2010, 2011); and the on-going pursuit of a 'National Wellbeing Index' (Office for National Statistics, September 2010, November 2012, September 2013). The latter of these was established to gather information from the nation to determine the perceptions of individuals on certain aspects of their life related to well-being and based on 'National Level Indicators'. This national information could then be compared to the information gathered across the world in the 'Happy Planet Index', as devised by nef's Centre

⁷ The eleven organisations were: Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, Association of Directors of Children's Services, Local Government Association, Mental Health Foundation, Mental Health Providers Forum, Mind, NHS Confederation (Mental Health Network), Rethink, Royal College of Psychiatrists, Centre for Mental Health, Together (The Future Vision Coalition, 2009).

for Well-being (nef, June 2012). The Index uses global data on life expectancy, experienced well-being and ecological footprint to 'measure' what matters and the extent to which countries deliver long, happy, healthy and sustainable lives – the Good Life.

Through the advancement of the mental health agenda two main components have become evident. The first component is that prevention, where possible, is presented as a more economically viable option than subsequently providing a cure. Secondly, social inclusion and organised activity are intrinsic to programmes promoting positive mental health and emotional well-being, which is seen in both government agendas and the cultural sector. There has also been increased evidence of the use of 'culture', or cultural organisations, as a resource for promoting this positive mental health and well-being, as demonstrated in the relationship with the governmental sector. The recent publication of *Healthy Attendance? The Impact of Cultural Engagement and Sports Participation on Health and Satisfaction with Life in Scotland* (The Scottish Government, 2013) demonstrates further display of national synergy between governmental and cultural sectors. The report was based on data from the 2011 Scottish Household Survey and stated that people who visited a museum were 20% more likely to report good health and 37% more likely to report high life satisfaction than those who did not (The Scottish Government, 2013: 6 and 16). This is another example of the impact of the cultural sector and the interest in promoting cultural engagement.

The Cultural and Museological Context

Culture: Unlimited produced one of the first visible publications coming from the cultural sector dedicated to mental health and well-being (2008). This provided evidence of relevant museum practice and potent suggestions for future development. The paper consolidated and promoted the importance of cultural organisations as a resource for encouraging positive mental health and emotional well-being through combining theoretical content and case studies. It also made a claim that visiting cultural organisations could provide 'prevention over cure' for

mental health conditions:

Museums on prescription. Just going to a museum is good for your mental health in the sense that it is reclaiming your time in what is often called a secular cathedral (where you have time to hear yourself think). Museums are also, as we've said, a kind of decompression chamber to slow (and calm) people down and give them the space to find their equilibrium again, which is a prescription that GP's could use without the same fear of side-effects as anti-depressant drugs.

(Culture: Unlimited, 2008: 30)

Whilst this claim might be over-ambitious and unrealistic in asserting such a powerful role for cultural organisations in the pursuit of remedial action for mental health, it does make an important claim for the therapeutic role of the museum. 'Prevention over cure' is not always possible, and cultural organisations cannot be expected to address or fix all societal issues, but museums and galleries are able to provide affective and emotionally engaged encounters that go some way towards contributing to general positive mental health and emotional well-being.

There has been an increased demonstration of projects within cultural organisations associated with the aim of promoting positive mental health and well-being. As these often retain the prominence of social interactivity and organised activity they could arguably be born out of the creative and social practice of Art Therapy. This movement originated most evidentially in the mid-20th century in English-speaking and European countries. It is the process of creating and producing artworks for cathartic and remedial benefits, providing a therapeutic tool for an array of mental and physical health conditions.

An example of the potential influence of Art Therapy and its benefits is seen in a recent and on-going (at the time of writing) project run by Dulwich Picture Gallery, London. 'Prescription for Art' and 'Good Times for Older People' are sessions intended for older adults combining a gallery visit with an art workshop. This programme has been devised to encourage participants to be physically active and

interactive whilst promoting positive mental health, particularly in the Third Generation. The programme, which is endorsed by nurses and GPs, aims to combat loneliness, inertia and boredom. Social interaction and organised, tailored activity are deemed in this instance as the best process to address mental health and well-being.

The Lightbox art gallery in Woking has carried out a similar project, with participants initially engaging with the gallery collections and then creating an artistic response to produce an exhibition for the public. 'Ways of Seeing' was a project working with those who have clinical diagnosis and are mental health service users that utilised the social and therapeutic benefits of organised arts-based activity.⁸ Subsequently, The Lightbox held a related conference, 'Landscapes of the Mind: The Art of Wellbeing' (28th June 2013), which explored relationships between the appreciation and creation of artworks, and mental health and well-being. This event was intended for professionals working in both the cultural and mental health sectors. The gallery continues (at the time of writing) to carry out these pioneering and innovative projects and events.

The Lightbox's work represents how practice is being extended beyond participants to include the Continued Professional Development of staff within the cultural and mental health sectors. The wider cultural community is promoting the mental health and well-being agenda through research and conferences. For example, the Museums Association held a conference, 'Healing Places: Therapeutic Museums' (March 2010), where various museum professionals were brought together to share their experiences and knowledge of museums and mental health. The main emphasis was on social inclusion and organised activity, again proving there are tangential routes for development. The organisation's Annual Conference followed this event in 2013, which held seminars based on 'The Emotional Museum' and 'The Therapeutic Museum' (Museums Association Conference, 2013). The work of the Happy Museum Project also demonstrates an interest in developing understanding and practice based on well-being in the cultural sector

⁸ This project was carried out between 2008 and 2011, with the resulting exhibition being held at The Lightbox in Woking between 15th January and 13th March 2011. For evaluation of this project see Bryant, Wilson and Lawson (2011).

(The Happy Museum Project website, n.d.).

Despite the socially interactive and highly organised element of these projects, insight into the interpretive and engagement strategies used by museums for self-led visitors did come to light at the Museum Association's 'Healing Places' Conference (March 2010). Manchester Art Gallery has produced a 'Well-being Trail', which helps visitors to engage with the collections on a more emotional and psychological level – considering their own lives, thoughts and feelings contextualised within the parameters of the objects with which they are engaging. This is an innovative move towards the general accommodation of all visitors within the practice of promoting positive mental health and well-being in cultural organisations. Whilst it is another representation of the use of tailored guidance and provision supplied by museums and art galleries, this still provides a shift to an emphasis on the general visitor engaging directly with collections through the assistance of effective and beneficial resources. My research is not directed towards a cultivation of resources for guidance and will instead primarily focus on the outcomes of engagement through implementing an evaluative strategy to assess the affective and emotional impact of art galleries on the unaccompanied visitor, identifying any associations with mental health and well-being.

Museum collections have been used beyond their own walls for therapeutic benefits. A prominent example of this practice is the project carried out in London hospitals by University College London. 'Heritage in Hospitals' promoted the use of museum handling collections with hospital patients and a related evaluative strategy. The therapeutic benefit of touch has been further asserted through the publication of related texts (Chatterjee, 2008; Chatterjee, Vreeland and Noble, 2009; Pye, 2008). UCL and the respective pioneers of the therapeutic potential of museum collections are continuing to develop the role of mental health and well-being within a cultural context. This can be seen in both the production of the 'UCL Museum Wellbeing Measures Toolkit' (Thomson and Chatterjee, 2013) and Helen Chatterjee and Guy Noble's publication of *Wellbeing, Health and Museums* (2013). The latter endeavour is the first seminal text to critique the use of museums in the promotion of well-being and health, particularly through an emphasis on

healthcare and organised projects.

The collaborative enterprise between the cultural and health sectors has been embodied by the establishment of the London Arts in Health Forum (LAHF). This is a network funded by Arts Council England that ‘supports artists and health professionals across the whole of London and beyond, promoting excellence and engagement in the field of arts and well-being, and extending the reach of the arts to communities and individuals who would otherwise be excluded’. The organisation endeavours ‘strategically to create a climate where all of society can be engaged in the practice and enjoyment of the arts – for the benefit of their health and the health of their communities’ (LAHF website, n.d.). The Arts Council have been involved in the on-going campaign to promote the impact and value of the arts on health and well-being (Arts Council, 2007) as it continues flourishing as an integral role of the cultural sector. Combined with the Cultural Value Project (AHRC) and The Happy Museum Project, there is a definitive emphasis on how the cultural sector can contribute to the pursuit of the Good Life, mental health and well-being. My role is to develop our understanding of the affectivity of engaging with paintings within this context.

Distraction and Immersion for Well-being

The art gallery, as well as other cultural organisations, is able to facilitate the promotion of positive mental health and well-being through the process of positive distraction and immersion. As identified by Culture: Unlimited in their conception of the museum as a ‘de-compression chamber’ (Culture: Unlimited, 2008: 30), these unique heterotopias (Bennett, 1995) provide a liminal (Duncan, 1995) space in contrast to our usual everyday existence where the well-being of the visitor can be restored or enhanced. This also adopts the historic Italian Renaissance idea of the relaxing and restorative environment of arcadia within the context of contemporary Attention Restoration Theory (ART) (Kaplan, Bardwell and Slakter, 1993; Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989; Ratcliffe, 2012).

The immersive and distracted experience is related to Kantian ‘disinterestedness’ –

an emotional affect experienced due to nothing but the pleasure of looking, the pure aesthetical encounter (Kant, 1790). This interpretation situates aesthetic experience, including engaging with visual art, as being 'purposive without purpose' (or 'final without end') – an autonomous act in itself with no other function. This is comparable to the 19th century premise of 'art for art's sake', as introduced to highlight the purely decorative function of paintings (Prettejohn, 2007). Disinterestedness is therefore an element of 'positive distraction' or 'immersion', as they imply the absolute engaged experience. Whilst it is not possible to engage visually without being informed by wider experiential, socio-cultural or political influences – and as the production and appreciation of paintings exist functionally beyond the decorative – consciousness of the surrounding tangible and intangible environment could momentarily and perceptibly dissolve through immersion.

Hans-Georg Gadamer actually saw it as indulgent, if not impossible, to regard something for pure aesthetic pleasure – a contradictory dogma to the 'disinterestedness' of the Kantian Ideal:

Aesthetic self-understanding is indulging in escapism if it regards the encounter with the work of art as nothing but enchantment in the sense of liberation from the pressures of reality, through the enjoyment of a spurious freedom.

(Gadamer, 1986: 130)

Gadamer does not condone this momentary escapism of aesthetic experience, or an autonomous and frivolous 'aesthetic consciousness'. Instead he conceives aesthetic experience as related to our perception of art within relation to the world and our experience of it, as well as how we express these experiences linguistically. My research of the aesthetic experience lies between the Kantian potential for immersion and Gadamer's contextualised phenomenological encounter (pp. 81-82). I also adopt 'aesthetic consciousness' as an adapted term more effectively applied to the informed, contextual, phenomenological and dialogical experience of the world, and thus the visitor experience of paintings in the art gallery.

Through the immersion of aesthetic consciousness, or positive distraction, a visitor is 'lost' in a moment as if all external factors are forgotten. This is comparable to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's theory of 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1990, 1996; Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, (Eds.) 1988), which has been projected onto the experience of engaging with art in the art gallery (Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson, 1990). Csikszentmihalyi and Rick Emery Robinson's research was carried out with staff that worked in an art gallery, who would have a different and informed relationship with the environment compared to the general visitor. The concept is however also applicable to the general visitor (Tam, 2006). Within Csikszentmihalyi's thesis the immersive 'flow' is described as follows:

Attention is so completely focused, so completely enmeshed in the interaction with the art work, that the viewer gives up, at least momentarily, his most human attribute: self-consciousness.

(Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson, 1990: 122)

In such an instance the viewer is lulled into an almost meditative state, being so absorbed that temporal, and possibly spatial, faculties are suspended and the usual banalities of the everyday are temporarily forgotten. This sense of 'flow' is comparative to a theory of positive distraction and could be related to a promotion of positive mental health and emotional well-being. Through this a sense of 'bi-location' is created, where the physical body is located in the physical art gallery space and the mind is immersed in the experience of that space and its contents. The construction of the art gallery space is often actively designed to provide a more engaged and immersive experience conducive to 'flow' (Harvey et al, 1998).

Immersive experiences are not always momentary and could be accumulative over time. The time visitors spend looking at paintings in art galleries has been the focus of various research and literature (e.g. Elkins 2010; Smith and Smith, 2001). Elkins surmises the following about those who look at a painting for a long time, particularly returning many times over many years:

Looking for a long time is not the usual way people see artworks. The usual interaction with an artwork is a glance or a glimpse or a cursory look. What I have in mind is a different kind of experience: not just glancing, but looking, staring, gazing, sitting or standing transfixed: forgetting, temporarily, the errands you have to run, or the meeting you're late for, and thinking, living, only inside the work. Falling in love with an artwork, finding that you somehow need it, wanting to return to it, wanting to keep it in your life.

(Elkins, 2010)

Through this comparison two temporal approaches to engaging with a painting are constructed – looking at a painting (the cursory glance) and seeing a painting (the immersive encounter). Both types of engagement could create an affective or emotive encounter but the immersive ‘seeing’ of a painting would arguably provide an enhanced affectivity and prolonged memorability.⁹

Summary

Between the governmental and museological agendas there remains a void that provides a purposive space for my research. Through a review and critique of past theory and current practice it becomes apparent that the mental health and well-being agenda of museums is predominantly based on social inclusion, organised interactivity and tailored activities. There is little research or practice based on the mental health and emotional well-being of the individual and unaccompanied visitor, a noticeable absence in the face of many solitary museum visitors.¹⁰ Some projects make use of the direct engagement with collections but this is often part of a wider organised experiential event. In these instances the related outcomes and evaluation are based on the whole event and not just the engagement with the collections or the environment of the art gallery. As these projects are inevitably run by a project leader and consist of a group dynamic they do not provide insight into how participants would engage with paintings in the art gallery on an individual, unaccompanied basis. Social interactivity is considered conducive to

⁹ This concept of ‘looking’ and ‘seeing’ is not related to Bourdieu’s ‘to see’, *voir* (Bourdieu, 1979: 2), as mentioned on p. 127 of this thesis.

¹⁰ There was no identifiable public research or figures based on the unaccompanied art gallery and museum visitor for the purpose of substantiation at the time of writing.

effective learning and affective encounters, whilst being undeniably important for mental health, well-being and social inclusion. However, I am investigating the alternative facet of the experience of unaccompanied visitors.

Another element of some past research into mental health and well-being is the apparent inclination to make use of the term 'measure' (e.g. 'Wellbeing Index', Office for National Statistics, September 2010, November 2012, September 2013). This is not a useful or effective term when assessing such complex, intangible and fluid entities as affect, emotion, mental health and well-being. In my research the terms 'evaluating' or 'assessing' will be used as they are more operational than 'measuring', which should generally be reserved for research into quantifiable outcomes. My research uses biographically conveyed experiential narratives to evaluate and assess the rise of the visceral in the affectively engaged art gallery experience and the role of visits in pursuit of the Good Life.

LITERATURE REVIEW: THE EXPERIENCE

Introduction

It would seem helpful to make more continuously visible how both persistence and change in culture depend on human activity; and how in contemporary, complex social life, the combined cultural process, and the overall habitat of meanings and practices in which we dwell, is the outcome of the variously deliberate pursuit by a variety of actors of their own agendas, with different power and different social and spatial reach, and with foreseen or unanticipated consequences.

(Hannerz, 1999)

The art gallery visitor experience is the integral element that draws together the interdisciplinary expanse of my research – particularly paintings, affectivity and well-being. Within these disciplines there are many contested, controversial, fluid,

indeterminate and intangible concepts that are often entwined, interrelated and interdependent. Whilst I could not hope to cover every aspect of every concept I will provide a concise hierarchical categorisation of the literature and theories that have most informed my research of the art gallery experience. This will include the components of experience; the Post-Duchampian experience; Phenomenology and the inter/active image; the museum and art gallery as sites of memory; the 'narrative dream space'; and the disenchanted experience. Through an account of relevant literature and theories I hope to further substantiate a robust and credible foundation for my research, whilst developing the resolutely contextualised conceptual framework.

Components of Experience

The essential components within my research can be summarised as the object, the institution and the visitor. Whilst this critical framework might not be innovative it is based within the parameters of similar structures used for investigating visual engagement with art (Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson, 1990: 139-175; de Duve, 1997). For example, Thierry de Duve uses similar 'ingredients' to produce an 'enunciative mayonnaise' (de Duve, 1997: 389-392). For the purposes of my research de Duve's ingredients are defined as: the object (painting); the institution (the tangible and intangible environment of the art gallery) and the visitor (translated from public/audience). The fourth ingredient mentioned by de Duve – the author – will be tentatively addressed in terms of the artist producing the artwork and based on the visitor as an 'author' of their own experiential narrative.

The first ingredient, the painting (i.e. the object), has three main functions – the physical (how the artwork is tangibly located within the experiential world through purposive intent), the social (communication; to represent or influence the world) and personal (for the artist and the viewer; the phenomenological dialogue between painting and viewer). The mutability of paintings is also situated in relation to the relativity of artistic identity and execution; temporally located social, cultural and political context; and the experiential narrative of the viewer

and the contemporary world in which they live. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel believed the defining characteristic of art was the 'sensuous presentation of the idea' (Graham, 2005: 52-53; Houlgate, 2010), which encompasses each of these functions and contexts. The media employed by the artist in the creation of a painting provides the effect that induces affectivity, emotion and physiological reception in an engaged viewer experience. This includes narrative, iconography (Hall, 1989; Straten, 1995), colour (Gage, 1995, 2000 and 2007; Goethe, 1810) and composition.

The second ingredient, the art gallery (i.e. the institution), informs and constrains the experiential, contextual and affective capabilities of paintings. The art gallery provides a 'narrative space' (pp. 96-98) that creates and influences the visitor experience, and contributes to the development of the self-narrative of individual experiential existence.¹¹ This environment can fundamentally be defined by two categories – the tangible and the intangible. The tangible includes the physical setting created by elements such as architecture, interior decoration, the light (artificial and natural)¹²; size and layout, as well as the collections and amenities within the art gallery. The relationship between the art gallery building – whether the space is purpose built (e.g. National Gallery, London, 1838) or the regeneration of an existing building (e.g. Tate Modern, London, 2000) – and the artwork within it provides a fascinating and complex dynamic, contributing to the impact and affect of visitor engagement and experience. It is however hoped that 'the space shouldn't dominate the art' (Serota in Beaven, 2011) but provide an enhanced and accessible viewing experience that complements and animates the paintings. The intangible components of the art gallery environment could include the ambience; the aural environment; the populated environment (the impact of other visitors and their behaviour); and temperature; as well as other indeterminate concepts that affect the visitor and their experience.

¹¹ The term 'narrative space' coincides with the title of a conference held at the School of Museum Studies at Leicester University. 'Narrative Space: An international interdisciplinary conference exploring the interpretive potential of architecture, exhibitions and design' (20th-22nd April 2010) was a three-day conference that explored the importance of the stories, voices and memories weaved through the museum.

¹² Light is defined here as tangible as it can be identified physically, with some sources of light coming from a physical fitting. Light can in a more expansive definition also be deemed intangible due to the subtle luminous nuances created by light sources, including both artificial and natural light.

The visitor experience is based on the convergence of internalised subjectivity and the externalised public domain. The external domain is created by the tangible and intangible environment, which is cultivated and semi-structured through curatorship and interpretation (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992; Macleod, 2005; Macleod, Hourston Hanks and Hale, 2012). The narrative of the art gallery visiting experience could therefore be impacted by the curatorial positioning of artworks and the order of display; the interpretive panels accompanying the paintings; and any other interpretive resources (e.g. map, visitor guide, audio-guide or multi-media guides). These external influences inform the visit but do not undermine the subjective agency of the individual visitor, in contrast to past suppositions of dictatorial construction of experience as seen in the 19th century Marxist concept of 'false consciousness'. Within this Marxist theory, 'false consciousness' was experience externally constructed in Capitalist society by the hegemonic authority of those in power. This occurs without the realisation of the people within that society. In this Marxist-perceived Capitalist dystopia the art gallery would be conceived as being curated to influence the visitors in line with the designed ideology of the political bodies running the state. Therefore, even the visitor experience of the art gallery would not retain any subjectivity as it would have been cultivated to influence the individual in a particular way. Whilst one might think that a painting could engage, or disengage, a viewer irrespective of its curatorial positioning or interpretive context it is difficult to determine whether this is the case, therefore artworks can only be considered within the context of their physical location.

The third ingredient, the visitor, is an integral component of the triadic composition that creates the experience of the art gallery. It is through the visitor that we understand how the art gallery and collections are perceived, as well as the potential impact they create. The visitor brings with them their own identity, all based on previously acquired experiential and factual knowledge. This informs the individual visitor's 'entrance narrative' (Doering and Pekarik, 1996) on arriving at the art gallery, combined with personal expectations. The 'entrance narrative' is defined as the contextualised subjectivity of the individual on arriving at the art gallery, as informed by contemporary internal and external components. Visitors

enter an art gallery with a cognitive and experiential framework, including: prior knowledge, memories, ideas, perspectives, emotions and the visiting social dynamic. The 'entrance narrative' will also be impacted by the 'threshold affect', which might include the fear or excitement of entering an art gallery based on pre-conceived and ingrained perceptions; the architectural impact of the entrance; or the socialised and populated environment on entering the art gallery. Visitors often expect a visit to an art gallery and the engagement with paintings to 'resonate, enrich, confirm and validate' (Doering and Pekarik, 1996). The expectations and 'entrance narrative' will also be affected by the pre-visit media potentially accessed by the visitor, such as the website, Smartphone app or related literature. Whilst reflective of the cultural venue this media is paramount to instilling a perceived notion of the art gallery and therefore visitor expectations. These expectations themselves will then only be validated through the relevant outcomes, such as enjoyment and the inspiration of an increased exploratory attitude. Outcomes are often based on transformation through developed confidence; development or changes in knowledge, ideas and perspectives; and alteration to mood or 'state of mind', such as increased well-being.

Each art gallery visitor adopts different roles, or combination of roles, based on identity, agenda and preferences. Visitors are also driven by an array of motivations. The visitor type could include: author; explorer/discoverer (Falk and Dierking, 2012); flâneur, gazer and 'the eye' (D'Souza and McDonough, 2008; Mitchell, 1986; Morgan, 2012; Rancière, 2009; Ruskin, 1971; Strain, 2003; Winterton 2003); imagineer (Annis, 1986; Fry, 1961; Kavanagh, 2000; Zeki, 1999); learner (DCMS, 2005, 2006; Falk and Dierking, 2000; Hein, 1998; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, 1994, 1999, 2007; NMDC, 1999); pilgrim (Appendix 2, Auto-ethnography, pp. 324-325; de Botton, 2011, 2013; Duncan, 1995; Falk and Dierking, 2012); and scaffold (enabler/facilitator) (Falk and Dierking, 2012; Vygotsky, 1978). These types of visitor are also associated with types of motivation for visitors, as defined by John Falk and Lynn Dierking (2012), including being curiosity-driven; socially motivated; a 'desire to satisfy specific content objectives'; social and cultural obligation (e.g. driven by a 'must-see attraction'); seeking of a contemplative, spiritual and/or restorative experience; to 'honour memory of

those represented'; enticed by a particular cultural destination or exhibition 'speaking to their sense of heritage and/or personhood'. The diverse roles and motivations of each visitor will determine how they engage with the art gallery and thus define the experiential outcomes of a visit.

The visitor experience of the art gallery is also perceived in a diverse array of guises, dependent on each of the three integral ingredients and their combination. These types of experience include: embodiment (Tschacher and Tröndle in Tschacher and Bergomi, 2011); immersion (Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson, 1990; Elkins 2010); interaction; sensory (Appendix 3, Auto-ethnography, pp. 326-330; Chatterjee, 2008; Chatterjee, Vreeland and Noble, 2009); sublime and phenomenal (Burke and Boulton, 1958; Kant, 1764; Longinus in Murray and Dorsh, 2000; Morley, 2010); perplexity, wonder and awe (Appendix 4, Auto-ethnography, pp. 331-335; Bennett, 1995; Elsner and Cardinal, 1994; Pearce 1999); play and festival (Bennett. 1995; Davey, 2007); restoration (Falk and Dierking, 2012; Kaplan, Bardwell and Slakter, 1993); spiritual and numinous (Ames, 1994; de Botton, 2011 and 2013; Duncan, 1995; Latham, 2007 and 2009; Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2005); and therapeutic (Chatterjee and Noble, 2013; Museums Association Conference, 2013). I will focus on a series of the most relevant types of experience related to my research, beginning with the psychology that informs them.

The affective experience of paintings can be substantiated by the psychological concept of Affect Theory, which directly and scientifically informs the phenomenologically conceived 'dialogical encounter' (Davey, 2007) (pp. 80-83). Affect Theory was initially introduced in the early 1960s by Silvan Tomkins (1962) who alleged it was possible to organise and categorise various 'affects' on humans and correlate the resulting respective physiological reactions. The text was divided into a volume dedicated to 'positive' affects and one dedicated to 'negative' affects, as conceived by Tomkins. Within this framework there are 'nine innate affects': Shame-Humiliation; Fear-Terror; Distress-Anguish; Dismissal; Disgust; Anger-Rage; Surprise-Startle; Interest-Excitement; Enjoyment-Joy. Each affect was attributed to an associated reaction – for example, fear resulting in a symptomatic reaction of 'a frozen stare, a pale face, coldness, sweat, erect hair' (Tomkins, 1962). This theory

of 'affect' can then be enhanced by a subsequent classification of emotion. Robert Plutchik created a 'Wheel of Emotions' based on psycho-evolutionary theory, as demonstrated in *Emotion: Theory, research, and experience* (1980). The wheel consisted of eight basic primary emotions that are inherent in all animals and adapted for the purpose of survival and evolution. These are anger, fear, sadness, disgust, surprise, anticipation trust and joy. Further 'advanced emotions' were then developed by combining two basic emotions.

This prescriptive, evolutionary and pre-cognitive approach to the classification of emotions is in opposition to the more organic, experiential phenomenology adopted in my research (Davey, 2007; Gadamer, 2004; Merleau-Ponty, 2002), where affect and cognition mutually transpire in an embodied experiential incarnation. However, the theory of Tomkins and Plutchik provide an enhanced framework of affect and emotion, whilst presenting a concise and transparent categorisation that could be theoretically applied to my research study. For example, these classification systems inform the methodology that collects, correlates and analyses data using a tentative system of emergent coding based on the terminology and themes of affect and emotions. Tomkins physiological symptoms also relate to the affective encounter of the art gallery experience, as seen in my auto-ethnographic account at the beginning of this thesis (pp. 15-17) and the research on tears by Elkins (2001), validating the physical reaction of affect. Through their systems of categorisation, Tomkins and Plutchik also provide a demonstration of the opposition constructed within the formation and categorisation of emotions – the 'positive' and the 'negative' – that is adopted in my research. These terms are not completely effectively adequate at accommodating the nuances of varying affect and emotions (for example, a 'negative' emotion or affect could result in a 'positive' outcome), but 'positive' and 'negative' are still the most robust terms for differentiation (p. 114).

Affect and emotion are created and perceived in the art gallery visitor experience through embodiment (Csordas, 1994; Tschacher and Tröndle in Tschacher and Bergomi, 2011). The art gallery experience thus unfolds through a process of embodied orientation and navigation that can be accounted for by an awareness of

Environmental Psychology (Bell et al, 2006; Carley; 2013). This discipline is defined as ‘the study of the interaction among the physical environment and mental construction of the individual’ (Carley, 2013). It includes both the intended and unintended outcomes, and the physical architecture and subjective cognitive construction. The sociality of an individual’s surroundings is also an element of the psychologically perceived environment. The concept of orientation lies alongside theories of the tangibility of place (Relph, 1976), the intangibility of space (Heidegger, 1978) and the bridge between them (Lefebvre, 1991). The museum visitor experience of these places and spaces can be approached through a process of ‘logogenesis’ – the ‘ongoing creation of meaning in the unfolding of text’ (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 43). This is where the experience of the built and surrounding environment unfolds tangibly and intangibly through time and space, similar to a textual structure, such as the experiential narratives that will be assessed in this research.

The physical process of navigating the space of the museum or art gallery is encompassed by the term ‘visitor circulation’ (Bitgood, 2006, 2011), which determines outcomes of the visit. The way in which ‘visitors circulate through museums determines what visitors will see, where they focus their attention, and, ultimately, what they learn and/or experience’ (Bitgood, 2006: 463). Whilst it is difficult to assess the perceptibility and generality of patterns of orientation, Stephen Bitgood (2006) believes it is at least possible to better understand the ‘movement patterns’ and ‘general value principle’ of ‘visitor circulation’. The ‘general value principle’ suggests ‘that visitor movement through museums can be explained in terms of the relationship between benefits (such as satisfying curiosity) and costs (such as time and effort)’ (Bitgood 2006: 464). Therefore, this principle is aligned with Csikszentmihalyi’s ‘flow’, where the interest level and required effort (physical, mental and psychological) of an activity need to be balanced for a satisfyingly affective and immersive experience.

Bitgood’s theory abandons Falk’s (1993) assumption that visitor-centred behaviour dismisses and undermines the developer’s exhibits and intended outcomes. Instead Bitgood believes that visitor behaviour is governed by the

‘interaction perspective’, which ‘assumes that visitor movement patterns through museums is influenced by both what the visitor brings to the museum (prior knowledge, interests, “agenda”) and the design of the museum (exhibit elements, architecture, open space)’ (Bitgood, 2006: 463). Bitgood also ‘assumes that both visitor and exhibit factors must be considered jointly. More specifically, the past experiences of the individual and his/her perceptual and cognitive characteristics interact with exhibition design to influence visitor attention, circulation and movement, mental processing, and learning’ (Bitgood, 2006: 463).

Visitor circulation is effectively visualised through the process of ‘mapping’ visitors’ movements through a museum or art gallery, as seen in the ‘eMotion: mapping museum experience’ project (eMotion website, n.d.) (p. 44). This project is representative of the use of a technological methodology to address the psycho-geography of visitors to an art gallery and the emotional impact of these visits:

Visitors who wanted to take part in the project, did receive a dataglove at the exhibition entrance that included several signalling and measurement sensors. The dataglove allowed for the precise measurement of the path of each individual through the museum, their speed, their time spent in front of a picture/object. We also measured the heart rate and the skin conductance and their variabilities. The immense amount of quantitative data generated was then validated by qualitative questionnaires, enabling the team to interpret the complex material adequately and thoroughly.

(eMotion website, n.d.)

From the data there were interesting assertions made about the orientation of visitors and the impact of engaging with an art exhibition. For example, the Head of the Project, Prof. Dr. Martin Tröndle, was quoted as stating ‘that artists, critics and museum directors often walk into the middle of an exhibition space, scan it and then maybe look at one work before continuing on, while visitors with moderate curiosity and interest tend to move diligently from work to work and read text panels’ (Tröndle quoted in Spears, 2012). It was also possible to assess how long a visitor spent in any particular area or in front of a specific artwork – the ‘dwell

time’ – which has been the focus of other research (Jones, 2000; Serrell, 1997; Smith and Smith, 2001).

The possibility of using a form of mapping (either technologically or manually) was explored for my own research to produce a self-developed visual and linguistic map of visitor experience as constructed by the participants. Due to the complexities discovered during trialling a manually devised mapping methodology, and the logistical constraints of employing technology, it was decided that this approach would not be suitable. Also, due to my eventual focus on experiential narratives, not the use of technology, these alternative approaches were dismissed. The technologically implemented eMotion research project represents another example of how language is required through the use of surveys and interviews to comprehend and contextualise the technologically garnered data, hence further validating my use of using and analysing language as my methodological technique.

All the aforementioned concepts are integral to understanding the affective and emotionally engaged experience of the art gallery and the subsequent account of theories applicable to my research. Through an appreciation of the three ingredients (object, institution and visitor) of experience and understanding the unfolding process of logogenesis it is possible to inform the development of the following thematic entities of art appreciation.

Post-Duchampian Experience

Within the movement of Postmodernism the perception and parameters of visual art and its appreciation would make a drastic and pivotal turn. Though contested, Postmodernism has been defined as a ‘space... where competing intentions, definitions and effects, diverse social and intellectual tendencies and lines of force converge and clash’ (Hebdige in Franscine and Harris (Eds.), 1992: 331-341). The movement was also the catalyst for the dissolution of the Grand Narrative and the nurturing of multi-narratives; the abandonment of universal truth; and the cultivation of eclecticism and variety. It is within this movement the crucial,

evolutionary moment in visual art arose. I will proceed with an appraisal of a seminal literary work that coherently categorises the transition in the way we perceive art, and what actually constitutes 'art', from the moment Marcel Duchamp created *Fountain* in 1917.

Kant After Duchamp (1997) by de Duve provides an essential literary analysis of the shift in the creation and perception of visual art, particularly the Fine Arts of painting and sculpture, as instigated by Duchamp and his oeuvre from the early 20th century onwards. The 'readymade' first defined and utilised by Duchamp is the particular focus of de Duve's text; whilst the affect Duchamp has on a re-interpretation of Kant's philosophical assertions on Aesthetics moulds it. The display of the signed 'ready-made' *Fountain* (1917) provoked a re-consideration and re-contextualisation of the definition of art and of artists. Through taking something not traditionally beautiful or sublime, i.e. a urinal, Duchamp distorts the appreciation of the eye and that of taste. The eye can now make an aesthetic judgement of something that would probably not be considered as traditionally or 'universally' beautiful or sublime, in Kantian terms (Kant, 1764). It was an 'object' that initiated this change, which had previously escaped being judged aesthetically through its attributions of fundamental functionality. Although not everyone subscribed to the Post-Duchampian transition, such as the Formalists, there was an undeniable development of art production and appreciation.

In this new aesthetical appreciation the Kantian 'This is beautiful' becomes a Duchampian 'This is art'. Through this shift – and a new lack of reliance on a hegemonic construction of beauty, taste and traditional artistic execution – art is deemed to be everything 'we' (the artist and the viewer) call art. The text affirms the dissolution of the 'universalised' association of 'art' with 'beauty' as pioneered by the theorists of the 18th century, such as Kant. The development expanded the scope, accessibility and subjectivity of aesthetic experience and emotions. Anything and everything can become art through conceptual, contextual and physical placement, and taste is no longer based on an elitist concept of traditional beauty or judgement. Choices made by the artist dissolve the polarised extremities of taste and refer instead to an aesthetic judgement that has a greater scope than

had previously existed. The artist now has the ability – within certain more loosely defined social, cultural and political parameters – to do ‘whatever’ (de Duve, 1997: 327-368). This changed the viewer appreciation of visual art generally and painting specifically.

The expansion and re-interpretation of art was further enhanced in the 1960s by the introduction of the ‘global village’ and a multidimensional society. This phenomenon opened up the doors to worldwide and widespread creativity. Joseph Beuys claimed that ‘every human being is an artist’ (de Duve, 1997: 284); whilst Greenberg introduced the concept of ‘art at large’, an ‘art that is, or can be, realized anywhere and at any time and by anybody’ (Greenberg, 1973). Thus art production and appreciation was ‘globalised’ and subjectified, extending its accessibility and affectivity. This further verified the premise that art is about choice – the choice of the artist, the gallery and the audience or buyer. Duchamp thus ‘emancipated’ art, the artist and even the viewer.

The experience of art has been further developed through advancements in technology (including the Internet) and the reproduction of visual imagery. Artistic media has developed and diversified, with increasing examples of interactivity in Modern and Contemporary art, such as the implementation of Relational Aesthetics (Bourriaud, 1998). The environment of the art gallery has also extended beyond its physical confines through the more flexible and broad propagation of the visual image, as seen in André Malraux’s ‘museum without walls’ (Malraux, 1949). Malraux’s concept was inspired by the increased reproduction of artworks in different media, or ‘surrogates’, that could be widely distributed beyond the physical walls of a museum. Since Malraux’s instigation of this term, the walls of the museum have extended far beyond the finite physical space and been recreated as globalised, intangible and flexible walls. It should also be noted that it is through reproduction that visual knowledge of Duchamp’s *Fountain* has perpetuated as the original went missing. This stimulates a reconsideration of the original artwork, the ‘surrogate’ and authenticity of experience.

The role and impact of the ‘surrogate’ has been researched through The Toledo

Picture Study, lead by Bradley Taylor (Taylor, 2001). This project carried out empirical research into the response of non-art specialists to five different formats of visual imagery – oil on canvas paintings, printed pages from books, black-and-white glossy photos, colour slides, and digital images. Taylor expresses how this research is founded on the combined principles of Erwin Panofsky and Walter Benjamin. Firstly, Taylor endeavours to investigate Panofsky's (1970) claim for the pre-iconographic understanding of the readily expressive components of a painting as comprehended from initial visual engagement, before iconographic knowledge has been identified or acquired. Non-specialists of Art History are naturally imbued with this pre-iconographic tendency and become the focus of the study. Taylor is also interested in Benjamin's (1935) consideration of the 'loss of aura' caused by technological, mechanical reproduction and varying affective impact between an original artwork and a reproduction, or surrogate.

Taylor's research is arguably problematic in relation to the conflicting theories of Panofsky and Benjamin (as acknowledged by Taylor), and by attempting to fit the research into a pre-determined hypothesis. However, Taylor manages to elevate the significance of visceral experience of visual imagery through accentuating affective and emotional impact. He also emphasises the importance of being aware of the role the surrogate plays in our experience of the visual world and engagement with original paintings. Taylor's research establishes an argument for a replacement of the 'loss of aura' with a re-conceptualisation of aura and the transference of authentic experience across different media. In spite of this, my research is interested in the experience, aura and affectivity of the original painting in the context of the art gallery. This will elevate the significance of subjective experience of the original painting in an increasingly technological, commodified and surrogated world.

Phenomenology and the Inter/active Image

The Post-Duchampian experience of engaging with paintings in the art gallery can most productively be viewed through the field of Hermeneutics and, more specifically, Phenomenology. Hermeneutics is a branch of knowledge that

addresses interpretation, whilst Phenomenology is the strand of that field which particularly deals with consciousness and perceptions of human experience (Jupp, 2006). Through the phenomenological process of engagement with the world the combination of external resources create an “interference system” with our own subjective cognitive and experiential knowledge, altering our perception of work of arts, the art gallery, our knowledge of the world and of ourselves (Armstrong, 2000: 20-21). In approximately the middle of the 20th century the experiential and phenomenological perception of the experience of visual art came to the fore through the work of two philosophers – Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Gadamer.

In *Phenomenology of Perception* (Merleau-Ponty, 2002), originally published in 1945, Merleau-Ponty devised a framework for recognising the conjoining of external context and subjective individualism within the experience of the world. This framework produced a new language of talking about painting, based on the phenomenological encounter. When we engage with a painting a phenomenological encounter occurs through a reactionary meeting between the object and the viewer. The viewer’s knowledge of the world is altered or developed and thus perception and experience of the world itself is transformed. Phenomenological experience of paintings is created through affect producing an ‘echo in our body’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1964 in Johnson and Smith, 1993), providing an embodiment of art through a visual, sensory, physical and cognitive reactive process.

Gadamer also became intrigued by the phenomenological encounter, contributing to the modernisation of Aesthetics by re-attributing the cognitive element to the sensorial appreciation of the world. Gadamer’s theoretical assertions went some way to muting the discrepancy between the analytic and intuitive approaches to Aesthetics from the 18th century, and the objective-subjective divide. By adding the cognitive element and positioning the ‘place of art in our experience of the world’ (Davey, 2007), Gadamer theorised that the concept of beauty and the aesthetic is not autonomous, neither is the appreciation of a beautiful object. The concept is instead a connection between the objective world and the individual subjective interpretation of that world. A dismissal of the occurrence of pure Kantian

disinterestedness thus transpires.

Gadamer endorsed a theory of the aesthetic as a phenomenological encounter that is a dialogical process between the artist, artwork and viewer perceived through an 'historically effected consciousness' (Gadamer, 2004) – within the history of that particular time period and the history of the individual. This resonates with connotations of the latter conception of the 'period eye' by Michael Baxandall (1933-2008). The 'period eye' is the supposition that art is created and perceived in relation to the temporally situated cultural, social, religious and commercial context, supplemented by the experiential capital of the viewer and the physiological capacity of the eye (Baxandall, 1972). Our perception of art within the world is located in relation to our own personal history and its temporal capacities throughout the duration of our life. The idea of accumulative, historic experience is also adjacent to the contextual process of learning and narrative. Therefore, an encounter with an artwork is on-going and cumulative over time, an example of *Bildung*. This encounter, and our understanding of it, is always being developed and re-interpreted – akin to all learning and our experience of the world generally. In Gadamer's conception the aesthetic encounter is a living process of 'becoming' (*Werden*); thus our identity, the world and the aesthetic are all intrinsically linked in our experience of existing (Davey, 2007; Gadamer, 2004).

The process of the narrativisation and maturation of experience and knowledge, or *Bildung* (Gadamer, 2004; Davey, 2007), demonstrates how the experience of the art gallery is not static or replicable. Even if an individual engages with the same painting in the same art gallery within the same social dynamic the experience will never be the same. The variable aspects of the external environment and the subjective psychological state of the visitor with their changed experiential materiality will have an impact on each experience. Each experience will be different. This is both applicable to visiting the same art gallery and looking at the same painting, as well as the phenomenological re-contextualisation of our perception of the world generally through accumulative and varied experience.

The contextual parameters of visiting an art gallery can be dependent on a variety

of factors, including: personal mood; developed cognitive capacity; altered individual perspective; surrounding environment; accumulative experience; or altered visiting dynamic. Social interaction or information provided by external sources might also furnish the visitor with a deeper or transformed understanding, or may change the perception of a painting or art gallery experience. Due to this unavoidable variability any research study investigating the engagement with paintings and visitor experience will be based on individual and isolated encounters. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to account for every tangible and intangible variable and to capture data accordingly for each participant. This does not undermine the impact of engaging with paintings or alter the credibility of the data collected. With enough credible and transparent data it should be possible to determine the presence of affectivity and identify some of the causes and symptoms of these encounters, whilst also producing thematic devices applicable to the art gallery visitor experience in general.

To account for the variables involved in each encounter an individual has with a painting or paintings, or the varying encounters different individuals have with the same painting, I propose the term 'regenerative and re-imagined viewing'. This term is not obviously identifiable in the literature explored for this research; it is a term I have created and developed for the purpose of my study but am unable to substantiate within established literature. The concept is however implied through interpretive critique of associated literature. Elkins provides an example of 'regenerative and re-imagined viewing', where a progressive dialogue is created through accumulative engagement with a painting (Elkins, 2010). This demonstrates that whilst the engagement is regenerative and re-imagined on each occasion there is also an accrued sense of continuation and coherence between each encounter (p. 111):

Either way, hate or love, to spend that much time in front of an artwork, you have to be in dialogue with it. You have to listen to it, and think something in response, and look again, and see how the work has changed. You have to believe that you can have an ongoing, evolving relationship with something that is unchanging. Many people might say that is impossible.

(Elkins, 2010)

Despite some continuation and coherence our experience of the world, and of engaging with a painting over time, is in a 'continual state of flux' (Zeki, 1999: 5). This is facilitated by an 'ambiguity' that is 'characteristic of all great art' (Zeki, 1999: 26) and conducive to regenerative and re-imagined engagement. Whilst this ambiguous 'state of flux' makes it difficult to capture and define the affective and emotional experience of engaging with paintings, these are also the components that provide a painting with the flexible and malleable potential for self-projection by visitors. Flux and ambiguity make it possible for an expansive range of people to have a diverse range of experiences with the same painting.

Regenerative and re-imagined engagement is altered or enhanced by imagination (Fry, 1961; Kavanagh, 2000). In 1920 Fry published *Vision and Design* (Fry, 1961), in which he charts his views on the relationship between art and human life, Science, Aesthetics and socio-historic contexts. Fry particularly questioned the position of art in relation to our experience of life and vice versa. He determined that art should not be considered as an imitation or interpretation of 'actual' life, as Plato believed and criticised, but as an embodiment of the 'imaginative' life we all possess to varying degrees. The imaginative life is produced through a connection between art and life where the artist – beginning in the Renaissance and further enhanced through the work of the Impressionists – creates an 'impression' of an imagined reality through the Formalist execution of a carefully composed use of colour, line and form. The 'impression' is then enlivened by the viewer through the process of engagement and is profoundly associated with an aesthetic sensibility that helps with the appreciation of art, most notably Modern Art. Although Fry asserts this concept within a Formalist context, imagination is applicable to all visual art and aesthetic experience, assisting in the realisation of the painting as

‘inter/active image’.

The ‘inter/active image’ transpires through phenomenological engagement and is activated by ‘the eye’, in both its physical and metaphorical capacities. Margaret Livingstone, Professor of Neurobiology at Harvard Medical School, has investigated the physiological and biological function of the eye through Visual Neurobiology. This discipline is closely associated with the Neuroaesthetics of Zeki (1999, 2009; Ishizu and Zeki, 2011) as both have an inherent interest in how visual engagement directly impacts the behaviour of the physical workings of the body. Livingstone is particularly interested in the connection between vision and art, investigating how the different components of art (composition, style, technique, colour) affect the eye and the brain (Livingstone, 2002).

Livingstone uses eye-tracking in her research to create a visual map of the eye’s orientation when engaging with art. She is particularly interested in determining where the eye is most drawn to during the process of visual engagement and deciphering the reasons for this. Eye-tracking is used in research as a scientific and technological investigative methodology to assist in developing an understanding of the literal ocular orientation of viewer engagement with the visual world. The method has only become a prevalent practice in the visual arts during the last few years, mainly due to the development and accessibility of relevant technology (Binnie, 2010; DiPaola, Riebe and Enns, 2010; Neault, 2013; Quiroga and Pedreira, 2010). However, eye-tracking the process of viewing art does have historically established origins.

The practice of eye-tracking was first knowingly employed by Alfred Yarbus in 1967 (Yarbus, 1967; Neault, 2013). Yarbus used what might now be regarded as an archaic contraption attached to the face of the participant to track the movement of the eye. This practice helped develop an understanding of the process of visual engagement. The areas focussed on by an individual are known as ‘fixations’, which are perceived through the fovea part of the retina, hence being termed ‘foveal vision’. This aspect of vision is the area of clarity in sight created by a fixation, as defined in an article on ‘Tracking the Gaze’:

Different parts of our vision have various different functions. When we look at a painting, we're typically using what is called "foveal vision." This is the optical function we use to see fine details. At the very center of our gaze, our visual acuity is amazingly sharp. However, the center of the gaze focuses on a relatively small point and at the periphery, our visual acuity (known as "resolution" in neurological circles) drops dramatically.

(Neault, 2013)

The eye naturally and rapidly moves between fixations to provide comprehension and contextualisation. The movements between these fixations are termed by Yarbus as 'saccades' – the 'change in the points of fixation was, roughly speaking, accomplished by movements of a single type – identical and simultaneous very rapid rotation of the eyes' (Yarbus, 1967:103). Through the continual process of fixations and saccades the peripheral vision seeks out subsequent areas of interest, detail or clarity to direct visual engagement. In this process 'the peripheral portion of the retina usually finds the object or element of an object which contains or may contain essential information, and consequently a process resembling reconnaissance takes place; this information is perceived and analysed in greater detail by means of the foveal part of the retina, when directed towards the object' (Yarbus, 1967:2). Through this the '[e]ye movements reflect the human thought processes' in the search for comprehension and contextualisation of experience of the world (Yarbus, 1967:190). In his research into engagement with paintings Yarbus also discovered that the viewer generally seeks out those areas of high contrast and fine detail, with particular emphasis on being drawn to areas of expressionistic and humanistic interest. However, what Yarbus was to discover through his research was that it was not just detail that viewer's sought but the features that provided narrative for the painting. As Yarbus's research into paintings predominantly focussed on one artwork with people in this did not account for more abstract or conceptual paintings. This absence has since been accounted for in more recent research projects (e.g. Quiroga and Pedreira, 2010).

The School of Museum Studies and the Department of Neuroscience at the University of Leicester recently carried out an inter-disciplinary research project

based on eye-tracking. 'Perception and wellbeing: a cross-disciplinary approach to experiencing art in the museum' used eye-tracking and ethnographic research methodologies 'to explore how wellbeing maybe impacted by viewing art on public display within a museum or art gallery' (Binnie et al, 2010). Due to the current lack of available information or literature about this research project it is not possible to critique it here, however it represents the significance of the research topics of visual engagement, paintings, art galleries and well-being.

There have been associated publications produced as part of the research at the University of Leicester, which informs our understanding of visual engagement with original artworks in the art gallery compared to a surrogate viewed in a lab (Quiroga, Dudley and Binnie, 2011). A comparative study was made between participants who viewed *Ophelia* (1851-52) by John Everett Millais in Tate Britain and participants who viewed a digital surrogate in a laboratory environment. The data analysis suggests those who view the original artwork are more exploratory with their visual engagement, making dispersed and expansive fixations and saccades across the canvas. It is also suggested that those who view the digital surrogate in the laboratory fixate more on the figure of Ophelia. This is claimed to be due to the ability to have a more texturally engaged experience with the original artwork because of the tangibility of the paint and the brushstrokes that is not evident in the digital surrogate. However, there are other elements that would also impact this visual exploration, such as the participants in the lab sitting down and being in a confined space, perhaps psychologically limiting the peripheral boundaries of their visual exploration. The research methodology would also need to be carried out with other paintings, such as those of an abstract or conceptual nature, to further investigate the difference in eye movements between the experience of the original and the digital. There is also no evident acknowledgement of the different ways people use digital images or the heightened development of quality of digital images seen in resources such as the Google Art Project – where the brushstrokes are at least evident, even if not dimensionalised. There is the additional complication that the comparable images used in the University of Leicester research are based on different lengths of viewing time due to the inconsistency of being able to wander around the art

gallery and being seated in the lab, as accounted for by the author. Whilst the research argues that the art gallery fixations are mostly on the area around the figure, I would argue from viewing the corresponding article (Quiroga, Dudley and Binnie, 2011) that there appears to be a relatively similar level of focus on the face in both the gallery and laboratory, thus continuing to substantiate earlier research claims that this is one of the main focal areas when engaging with paintings with people in (Buswell, 1935; Humphrey and Underwood, 2010; Livingstone, 2008; Neault, 2013; Yarbus, 1967).

Despite its inconclusivity and the particularities of the methodology, the University of Leicester research project does inform our understanding and interest of the practicalities of visual engagement and how this 'activates' paintings. One of the most significant assertions made in the related research paper is for the complexity of assessing the impact of visual engagement due to the subjectivity of the viewer and the fluid integral components:

The subjective qualities involved in the experience of art have hindered extensive scientific study in this area. The great variability involved in personal experience and the natural environment presents difficulties for researchers attempting to unpick the web of interacting factors involved, as a traditional approach of controlling the variables so that only one is altered can be impractical. At the same time, those coming from an arts and humanities perspective may be wary of such a reductionistic approach, thus the foundations of our understanding the perception of art has been built slowly.

(Quiroga, Dudley and Binnie, 2011: 15)

Scientific inquiry of the physical, physiological eye is complemented by the metaphorical incarnation of the eye. Through the phenomenological process of engagement the art gallery visitor adopts the role of the 'embodied eye'.¹³ This is aligned with the multi-sensory, embodied process of logogenesis (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 43) as a visit around an art gallery unfolds as an experiential

¹³ This term has previously been used by David Morgan (2012) in relation to engaging specifically with religious imagery. The term is used here in a more general sense of engagement with different types of visual imagery.

narrative. The embodied eye asserts that the visual encounter with a painting is experienced through the embodiment of the viewer, or active participant. As I have established, the experience of looking at paintings is not based on autonomous 'pure vision' (Kant, 1790) but is contextualised within much wider parameters as experienced by the whole sensory, physical and cognitive being.

The 'embodied' art gallery visitor experience is based on four primary factors (Tschacher and Tröndle in Tschacher and Bergomi, 2011: 251-261). The first of these, seen through the perspective of Psychology, is that the 'body permeates the aesthetic perception of art' as the viewer makes sense of engaging with art through the process of cognition. This cognitive process is intrinsically attached to the receptive experience of the body, i.e. embodiment, with it being argued that no 'pure cognitive' process exists (Tschacher and Tröndle in Tschacher and Bergomi, 2011: 253). The second factor is that 'aesthetic perception is necessarily embedded in physiology' through the intrinsic link of emotions with associated physical reactions. As 'viewers in general combine aesthetic assessments ("this artwork is beautiful") with emotional evaluations ("this artwork is likable, joyful, interesting")', there will always be an implicit physiological reaction of varying degrees (Tschacher and Tröndle in Tschacher and Bergomi, 2011: 253-54). Thirdly, viewers are not 'passive receptors of artistic stimuli... the audience is using and moving their bodies continuously'. Even if carried out subconsciously, the visitor responds to the art and environment they are engaging with through facial expressions, posture and gestures, which create 'expressive movements'. This makes the body part of the 'sensori-motor loop of art reception' (Tschacher and Tröndle in Tschacher and Bergomi, 2011: 253-254). Finally, as art is viewed in an architectural and curatorial context, often designed for purposeful visitor behaviour and orientation, the physical locomotion of the visitor is an integral part of the experience of the art gallery, providing another facet of embodiment (Tschacher and Tröndle in Tschacher and Bergomi, 2011: 253-254). Hence the art gallery visitor combines visual engagement with embodiment to adopt the role of the embodied eye.

This embodied eye encompasses the subjective experience of the individual in the

art gallery through the 'tourist gaze' (Strain, 2003), where the visitor is in an environment beyond their usual existence, heightening the sensibility of the eye. The embodied eye is situated alongside other concepts of visual engagement, such as 'the gaze', 'the innocent eye' and 'pure gaze', and 'the emancipated spectator'. The innocent eye, and associated pure gaze, is defined under the Kantian ideal of pure vision and 'disinterestedness' (Kant, 1790), being subsequently adopted by John Ruskin. In 1857 Ruskin claimed that the 'technical power of painting depends on our recovery of what may be called the "innocence of the eye"' (Ruskin, 1971: 27), advocating that the visual assessment of the image in front of you was self-contained, i.e. purely paint on canvas. Whilst this was initially applied to the creative production of painting it was also expanded to the visual engagement with paintings, based on a childish and naïve experience of sight separated from other contextual influences. This would be critiqued and adapted by Gombrich, Panofsky and W. J. T. Mitchell (Mitchell, 1986), who believed in the contextual relevance and unavoidability of experiential and cognitive knowledge, as well as other external factors influencing the visual encounter.

The process of contextual sensori-motor logogenesis (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004; Tschacher and Tröndle in Tschacher and Bergomi, 2011) carried out by the visitor as embodied eye adopts a role comparable to the flâneur or flâneuse. The term flâneur was originally coined by Charles Baudelaire in the 19th century to describe the gentleman who wanders through a place purely for the purposes of socio-cultural absorption; the flâneuse was the female equivalent that was underrepresented at that time (D'Souza and McDonough, 2008). The flâneur/flâneuse is inherently entwined with concepts of 'the gaze' due to the physiological, philosophical and psychological act of visually engaging with one's surroundings. The flâneur/flâneuse is partaking in an embodied and affective experience beyond just visibility, resulting in the embodied eye – an integral element of every art gallery visitor (Morgan, 2012; Winterton 2003). The art gallery provides an experiential opportunity for the flâneur/flâneuse through a semi-structured narrative environment positioned within a wider socio-cultural context.

The process of engagement in the art gallery is enlivened by the animation of paintings through humanistic projection. Reflecting the self onto surrounding objects and environments creates a 'mirror stage' (Lacan, 2001) to provide contextualised and subjective experience. From 2005 there emerged a focus on the anthropomorphisation of paintings and visual imagery, as evident in the proclamations of various theorists and art historians. Mitchell stakes a claim for pictures being animated objects (Mitchell, 2005); Elkins has continually produced and revised a presentation entitled 'Can Pictures Think?' (originally 2006) that is a development of this theory¹⁴; whilst Jacques Rancière produced 'The Emancipated Spectator' (2009) based on his inherent interest in the 'politics of perception'. In a chapter entitled 'The Pensive Image', Rancière explored the general perception of the visual world by dismissing the concept of the viewer as a passive spectator of a spectacle, with particular reference to theatre and photography. Through positing the viewer as active there was an added dimensionality to the encounter of viewing art through a dynamic and contextualised dialogue. The viewer is emancipated through activated involvement. This emancipation is an adaptive development of that provided through the change in art instigated by Duchamp (1917) and critiqued by de Duve (1997). These examples demonstrate how the humanisation of art also relates to the viewer contextualising themselves in relation to the world through the phenomenological embodied eye. It seems that 'museums are places where people go to think and feel about what it is to be human' (O'Neill, 1994).

The Art Gallery as a Site of Memory

Museology, by nature a social science, pertains to the sphere of mnemonic and documentary scientific disciplines, and contributes to the understanding of Man within society.

(Stránský, 1980)¹⁵

¹⁴ For example, at the 'Interpretation, Theory and the Encounter Symposium' held at Tate Britain on Friday 9th July 2010.

¹⁵ Cited in Desvallées and Mairesse (Eds) (2010).

The desire to ensnare and preserve memory is a fundamental human pursuit.

(Gingeras, 2005)

The past is what you remember, imagine you remember, convince yourself you remember, or pretend you remember.

(Harold Pinter, date unknown)

Memory is a fundamental and formative facet of phenomenological and embodied experience, as well as an integral aspect of the visitor experience of the art gallery. It also contributes to the development of the inter/active image. The role of 'autobiographical memory' – a cohesive adjoining of multi-faceted remembered experiences and acquired factual information – is paramount to the experience of engaging with paintings. Autobiographical memory is situated within the wider parameters of the collection and presentation of historical, socio-cultural and political collective memory as constructed by the art gallery, which informs and influences our experience and perception.

Through what might be perceived as a tenuous link I would momentarily like to focus on the accompanying programme for a recent production of a play by Harold Pinter as it effectively investigates the complexity and power of memory. During the research process I attended the play *Old Times* at a London theatre in the West End. The play and the introductory text in the accompanying programme deeply resonated with me as I was concurrently considering the role of memory in my research. In the introductory prose to the programme Charles Fernyhough, a Developmental Psychologist and author, explores the integral entity of memory used in the play, drawing on the expertise of the psychologist Martin Conway:

The psychologist and memory expert Martin Conway has proposed that two forces go head-to-head in memory. The force of correspondence acts to make our memories true to the way things were, while the force of coherence acts to tell a story that suits the self. We know that autobiographical memory is a reconstructive

process, drawing together different sources of information and putting them together in ways that can differ subtly from telling to telling. These dynamic reshapings often serve to make memories as true to how we want the past to be as to how it actually was...

The reconstructive nature of memory guarantees it this creative power, and furnishes it with properties that make it something akin to imagination. In fact, neuroscientists now think that imagination and memory draw on common neural resources, in the hippocampus and medial temporal lobes of the brain.

It's perhaps no surprise, then, that imagination can feed into memory, and that things imagined can become things remembered. Psychological studies support the idea that simply imagining that something happened can in some cases lead us to 'remember' it.

(Ferryhough, 2013)

This concise description effectively describes the reconstructive nature of memory – a combination of perceived experience, imagination and temporal recollection. The text also introduces the concepts of 'false memories' and 'non-believed memories', as articulated in a quote from the aforementioned Pinter play:

There are some things one remembers even though they never happened. There are things I remember which may never have happened but as I recall them so they take place.

(Anna in *Old Times*, 1971)¹⁶

False memories are those that are cognitively manifested by an individual and subsequently believed to have actually taken place. These false memories occur when a memory has been adapted through retrospective alteration, which has to be acknowledged when carrying out retrospective visitor interviews in my research. False memories are often caused due to the incapacity of the mind to recollect truthfully and reliably after the passage of time. Non-believed memories are where an event that has actually occurred is no longer believed to have happened by an individual. Fabrications and dismissals of memories show the

¹⁶ Cited from Pinter (2004: 31-32).

fluidity and complexity of the role of memory in experience, especially when combined with imagination. The definition of memory substantiates a supposition that all experience is a tableau of memory, imagination, lived experience in real time and acquired cognitive and experiential information, as well as those voids where memories have been lost or appropriated.

The accumulation and projection of memories play an integral role in our experience of museums and art galleries. This is documented in detail by Gaynor Kavanagh who asserts that we are all 'physical embodiments of our memories' (Kavanagh, 2000: 15-18), whilst also acknowledging the fluidity of memory and the potential materialisation of false memories. The museum itself has been defined as a 'possible *'lieu de mémoire'* (or site/realm of memory)' by Loren Rivera-Orraca, who concludes 'that museums can be creative entities that open up the possibility of dialogue between past and present: a meeting point between history and memory' (2009: 32). Whilst the predominant focus of Rivera-Orraca's article is on the construction and appreciation of collective memory in historical museums it does raise the importance of the role of memory in cultural organisations generally, including the art gallery. The article investigates how memory is constructed and re-constructed; how it is interpreted and re-interpreted; how it influences our experiential engagement with the world; and how memory impacts on our perception of our identity and position within this world. The most significant strand running through the article is the concept of identity – the personal and the collective.

Memory in all its incarnations is conducive and integral to the creation and contextualisation of experiential narratives. All memories 'have temporal and spatial references, contexts that connect us to specific events that we may or may not have experienced, such as the case of autobiographical vs. historical memory (internal or external memory)' (Rivera-Orraca, 2009: 34). Memories can also be created, situated and contextualised through social collectivity or exist in subjective isolation. Art gallery collections are saturated with inherent memory as paintings and objects are all produced and perceived through an implementation of memory.

In an essay to coincide with the Saatchi Gallery exhibition 'The Triumph of Painting', Alison Gingeras (2005) commends the mnemonic nature of paintings.¹⁷ The purpose of the exhibition was to accentuate the importance of paintings and re-ignite an interest in this art form following an increasingly expansive incorporation of different media in the contemporary art world. Gingeras states that paintings have a 'material sensuality, tactility, and atmospheric possibilities' that can 'prompt the senses through association', whilst being able to 'trigger a free play of association or become a catalyst for a web of connections that relate to the viewer's own memory bank' (Ginergas, 2005). Gingeras also significantly asserts 'the mnemonic potential of painting to weave together hybrid tableaux, conflating personal stories and collective events' (Gingeras, 2005). Paintings can be 'drenched in narratives and imagery taken from... collective memory', whilst including the artist's investigation of 'universal experience and collective consciousness' (Gingeras, 2005). This collectivity could provoke the element of humanistic empathy often integral to the experience of engaging with paintings (Elkins, 2001: 180).

Critique of associated literature has made it possible to establish that there are three identifiable sources of memory when engaging with paintings – that of the artist who can collect and 'exorcise' her/his memories (Ginergas, 2005); the collective memories of perceived public experience (Rivera-Orraca, 2009); and the memories brought to the experience of engaging with paintings by the individual viewer (Kavanagh, 2000). A painting has a defining 'capacity to stir a great deal in the brain's stored memory of past events' (Zeki, 1999: 29). The projection of memories onto a painting could assist in providing the conditions for an affective encounter or emotionally engaged experience, whilst situating the painting as a *memento mori* or *memento vitae* – a reminder of life, death and mortality. This occurs through a convergence of memory with phenomenological experience, the embodied eye and the inter/active image.

¹⁷ 'The Triumph of Painting' exhibition was held at the Saatchi Gallery in London from 26th January to 30th October 2005; and Leeds City Art Gallery from 25th January to 12th March 2006.

The Narrative Dream Space

The integral components of art gallery visitor experience – Post-Duchampian art appreciation, phenomenology, the embodied eye, the inter/active image and memory – can most effectively be accounted for through the acknowledgement of the art gallery as a ‘narrative dream space’. This is created through a convergence of external and personal entities, knowledge and interpretation; subjective perspective and agenda; imagination; and memory. The concept of the ‘dream space’, as defined by Sheldon Annis (1986) and Kavanagh (2000), situates the museum visitor experience as a ‘movement through three overlapping symbolic spaces: cognitive, pragmatic (social) and dream’ (Kavanagh, 2000: 2). The art gallery visit unfolds as experiential topography and logogenesis (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 43). Kavanagh develops the dream space metaphor as being a process of experience that extends beyond the museum and exists in our everyday lives, whilst elevating it as the most important aspect of the museum visiting experience.

Within the dream space, Kavanagh acknowledges the dialogical capacity of engaging with objects and its affect on our experiential understanding and knowledge within the context of Phenomenology (Kavanagh, 2000: 11). She also signifies the important role of memory through an exploration of Psychology and Neuroscience. Memory is involved in the ‘process of transference’ where our thoughts and feelings are projected onto the ‘neutral, contained and inanimate’ object to create a phenomenological, engaged and affective encounter (Kavanagh, 2000: 22), akin to a form of the ‘mirror stage’ (Lacan, 2001). In a semiotic definition, the object becomes a ‘referent’ or ‘prompt’ with ‘experiential meaning potential’ (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001). The mind has a dialogical encounter with an object, bringing with it ‘a kaleidoscope of memories, prejudices, hopes, habits and emotions which are constantly expanding and enriching [our] life as [we] develop’ (Kavanagh, 2000: 9). This is also supplemented by factual knowledge of the world that has been previously acquired and the creative use of our imaginations.

The dream space becomes a conscious and subconscious, organic narrative of the

visiting experience based on our perception of the world. Therefore, the dream space is intrinsically linked with the art gallery as 'narrative space'. There are two main overarching conceptual narratives involved in the art gallery visiting experience that cultivate the 'narrative space' – the externalised and internalised. The externalised narrative is created by the tangible and intangible elements of the art gallery. This includes the purposive and structured narrative of curatorship and interpretation, as well as the more intangible or subconscious narratives created through the experience of the art gallery environment. The narrative is conceptualised and contextualised within wider contemporary and historical socio-cultural and political parameters providing a socially, temporally and culturally composed context. The external narrative provides a forum for interpretive meaning-making (Hooper-Greenhill et al, 2001) and dialogue conducive to affective, emotive and visceral experience.

The second narrative is the internalised visitor narrative, which is conceived consciously and subconsciously by the visitor within the context of 'historically effected consciousness' (Gadamer, 2004), 'aesthetic consciousness' (Davey, 2007; Gadamer, 2004) and memory (Ferryhough, 2013; Gingeras, 2005; Kavanagh, 2000; Rivera-Oracca, 2009). This internal narrative is how the visit transpires based on prior visitor knowledge and experience, as well as current state of mind, personal preference or agenda, and through contact with external factors. Through narrative the visitor makes sense of an experience and contextualises it within relation to their perception of the world and their own identity – a direct implementation of the visitor as 'author'. The narrative might be semi-structured through direct planning of a visit with intended outcomes, for example. Or the internal narrative might organically unfold during an unplanned visit to the art gallery whilst the visitor adopts the role of 'explorer' (Falk and Dierking, 2012).

The externalised and internalised narratives collaboratively produce a dialogical interaction between object, institution and visitor as part of the dream space resulting in an emotionally engaged and affective experience for the visitor. The overall art gallery experience is conceived as a 'liminal' (Duncan, 1995) or 'dream space' (Annis, 1986; Kavanagh, 2003), conducive to contemplation and reverie

(Strain, 2003). The visitor is taken outside of their everyday lives in a unique environment, perhaps conceived as a secular cathedral (Culture: Unlimited, 2008; de Botton, 2011 and 2013; Duncan, 1995). In this environment the visitor experience is created by the 'threads of memory, imagination, feelings and identity' (Kavanagh, 2000:2) that run through both the art gallery and the experiential identity of the visitor – producing the Narrative Dream Space.

The Disenchanted Experience

Whilst there are many positively perceived aspects of the art gallery experience there are also those aspects that might be negatively perceived. It would be naïve to assume that all visitors would always have an affirmative experience. Therefore, for any visitor research study it is important to acknowledge the elements of visitor experience that might have an unconstructive or destabilising outcome. This might be a negative reaction to the experience resulting in a negative affective encounter (e.g. boredom); cognitive, emotive or recreational dislocation (i.e. finding it challenging or difficult to engage with the environment, its context, its contents or curatorship and interpretation); or 'negative' distraction (an element that distracts the visitor from the cultural venue and experience, rather than enhances engagement and immersion through positive distraction). These elements could all be categorised as, or formulate, the term 'disenchantment' (Weber, 2001, originally 1904/1905), which is often caused in response to 'museum fatigue' (Davey, 2005; Gilman, 1923), 'disorientation' (Shklovsky, 1917 in Rivkin and Ryan (Eds.), 2004), or 'de-familiarisation' (Brecht, 1964).

Museum fatigue has its origins in Stendhal Syndrome but often with more negative connotations. The phenomenon is also related to being 'overwhelmed' by a cultural venue, perhaps due to its size or the complexity of its collections and interpretation. Museum fatigue could also literally be the tiredness induced from traipsing around a museum or art gallery, as well as the boredom some people experience in such situations. Benjamin Ives Gilman (1923) first coined the term museum fatigue, suggesting that as a visit to a museum progressed visitors became less interested. This theory was then used as a basis for museum visitor research

in the 1920s and 1930s (Davey, 2005: 18). More recently Gareth Davey (2005) has suggested that 'museum fatigue', whilst a relevant term, is perhaps not as straightforward as suggested by Gilman:

Visitor attributes, the museum setting, and interaction between them, seem to underpin fatigue, and their relative importance differs according to the behavioural changes under investigation.

(Davey, 2005: 18)

Through a critique of literature related to the museum visitor experience, Davey introduces overarching conclusions about museum fatigue (Davey, 2005: 18). The most relevant of these claims for my research is that 'it has been shown that interest reaches a high plateau for the first 30 minutes of a visit, and decreases thereafter' (Davey, 2005: 18). This time period was chosen for the unaccompanied self-led visits of participants for the on-site ethnographic study in my research due to its assumed suitability.

'Threshold fear' is another example of the disenchanted experience. This is a fear of entering a building or space, literally crossing the threshold, due to the affective discomfiture of the environment based on elements such as prior experiential knowledge or contemporary perception. Threshold fear is often ingrained with the sentiment of elitism, harking back to the grandiose architecture of many galleries founded in the 18th and 19th centuries. The protagonists of the Victorian museological revolution wanted the architecture to resonate the importance of collections within the buildings, often using the referents of Classical architecture (Armstrong, 2005: 67-69). Whilst these museums and art galleries were free to enter and intended for all echelons of society, the physical features of these buildings presented visitors with an imposing edifice that could provoke a sense of 'threshold fear'. Despite the intended accessibility this was often realised in an elitist, educationally moralising capacity at that time. The perceived socio-cultural sentiment of elitism still remains ingrained in the 21st psyche in some instances, with threshold fear being evident in some recent literature and theory (Duncan, 1995). This continues to be based on the affect of elements such as architectural

design, perceived status and subjective self-consciousness.

Summary

Whilst we can go some way to exploring the emotionally engaged experience in the art gallery it may never be fully understood due to integral complex entities – like many aspects of human nature and experience. This makes my research both valid in its exploration and contentious in being unable to substantiate a fully comprehensive outcome. However, research is essential to develop understanding of processes of engagement.

The visitor experience of the art gallery and paintings is both complex and significant, based within a phenomenological embodiment of the world. Whilst it is possible to identify integral elements of this experience, and identify essential ingredients (e.g. the object, institution and visitor), it is not possible to assess them autonomously as they are intrinsically interrelated. Experience is most effectively understood in its *totality*, as defined by Armstrong in his quest for defining beauty and its affect based on the entirety of the mutually conceived physical and experiential components (Armstrong, 2005; Bhaskar, 2008). Armstrong states that experience is not based on one particular element but is based on the ‘law of the whole’ (Armstrong, 2005: 39), encompassing all of the components of an object within the wider physical and psychological context in which it is rooted. Totality thus relates to an embodied and all-encompassing ‘affect’.

The subjective experience of the totality of components within an external object or entity is based on ‘extreme relativism’, or subjectivity, of the individual experiencing it (Armstrong, 2005). Totality is also related to an interpretation of *gestalt* theory, which perceives that the whole of an object (or experience) is greater than the sum of its parts (Ehrenfels, 1890).¹⁸ Whilst it would be difficult to assess the direct implementation of the legitimised theory of *gestalt* as part of the art gallery visit for this research the term could be used to define the whole art

¹⁸ Gestalt Theory is also applicable to the process of how the brain cognitively materialises what the eye cannot see (or body cannot feel) to create a whole – the *gestalt* (Ehrenfels, 1890).

gallery experience in general and how the visitor/participant uses their cognitive and sensory capabilities to develop, enhance and contextualise the overall visiting experience (Falk and Dierking, 1992, 2012).

The process of phenomenological experiential totality extends the historicised conception of the visitor 'gaze' from being a purely critical observer of didactic knowledge to the production of an emancipated embodied eye who has a dialogical relationship with the world around them through varied tableaux of encounters. Each one of these types of experience provides an opportunity to have an affective and emotive encounter that impacts states of mental health and well-being in the narrative dream space of the art gallery. My research is hence contextualised in relation to the affective, emotional, visceral and therapeutic art gallery, as well as the role of the art gallery as a *lieu de memoire*. Above all I have established substantiation of the affective experience of engaging with paintings and the art gallery accessible to everyone through visceral and cognitive subjectivity.

We each have our own history of impassioned looking – of looking which is woven through with feeling. The experiences differ in phenomenal quality: some are tender, others haunting, some sweet or playful, or again stamped with nobility and grandeur. They may be recalled as fugitive and hard to pin down, as existing in an Arcadian period from which we are now cut off; they may seem crystalline, they may be inviting and invigorating or touched by sadness and uncertain longing. That is, we are all already acquainted with the extraordinarily subtle ways in which feeling gets linked to vision and memory; we already possess, if only we can make use of it, the most important resource for looking at art.

(Armstrong, 2000: 39)

LITERATURE REVIEW: SUMMARY

This concludes the Literature Review for my research. Through providing an in-depth, insightful foundation based on established theory, literature and practice I have situated my research within its complex and inter-disciplinary field. Through

reconciling the fields of Aesthetics, Educational Theory, History, Art History, Museology, (Museum) Visitor Studies, Philosophy and Psychology, as well as governmental and mental health agendas, I am producing multi-faceted and significant research in the field of the visitor experience of engaging with paintings in the art gallery – with specific emphasis on affect, emotion, mental health and well-being.

The convergence of all the topics within this research has revealed the niche in which my contribution to knowledge will be located. With an evident absence of research and literature based on the experience of the unaccompanied visitor and the affective impact of engaging directly with collections (i.e. paintings), this thesis will extend the understanding of contested, fluid and intangible entities. The critique of past literature, theory and practice therefore provides a robust foundation and identifies a void in which to continue with a credible research study.

CHAPTER 3: THE RESEARCH PARADIGM

Introduction

When considering investigative inquiry into complex disciplines – such as affect, emotion, mental health and well-being – it is important to find a legitimate and effective research paradigm and associated methodology. Many factors need to be accounted for when researching these disciplines, including: the variability of psychological elements based on an expansive array of external factors; the fluidity and variation of the capacity of language amongst participants; the conscious verbalisation of experience being framed for the purpose of the research, which may be different to the participant's internal consciousness; the dislocation of experience from its linguistic expression; and the questionable 'quantifiable' potential of affective and emotional response. As with all research, these factors need to be considered and critiqued to define and defend the construction of the research paradigm and its methodology. Pilot studies need to be carried out for the chosen methodology to ascertain whether it is able to effectively dilute the hindrance of various variable elements, whilst acknowledging that it is impossible to avoid or completely overcome them.

Through discounting the scientific constraints of Positivism, my research assumes a phenomenologically-infused Constructivist and Interpretivist stance. For the purposes of substantiating my research within a conceptual and theoretical framework I used a combination of Narrative Research (e.g. Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, 2008; Chase, 2005; Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Goodson, 2013) and 'messy method' (Law, 2004 and 2007; Law and Urry, 2004), located within the wider theoretical context of a 21st century incarnation of Aesthetics and Museum Visitor Studies. 'Messy method' is situated alongside the theoretical concept of *bricolage* – a Constructivist, multi-perspectival and multi-methodological approach to inquiry specifically devised for the purposes of addressing the complexity of researching socio-cultural experience (Denzin and Lincoln, 2004: 4-6; Kincheloe, 2001, 2005; Kincheloe and Berry, 2004; Nelson et al, 1992: 2; Weinstein and

Weinstein, 1991: 161).¹⁹ The components of qualitative Social Science research have also been supplemented with the complementary implementation of an advanced adaptation of Morris Hargreaves McIntyre's 'modes of visitor engagement' (2005), with particular emphasis on the 'emotional' and 'spiritual' fields.

Under the theoretical framework of this research paradigm I carried out in-depth qualitative data collection and analysis, which was complemented by minimal employment of quantitative research to provide distinct statistical information to the more substantive narrative data. A varied, dynamic and extensive multi-methodology needed to be used to account for the developing and expansive interpretation of visitor engagement and experience in art galleries, whilst capturing nuances of shifting transformation and change caused by engagement with paintings in this cultural setting. From this it was possible to more readily locate emerging patterns for defining outcomes and theories, as well as provide concepts for future development.

The two most prevalent media used for my chosen methodology were the 'virtual' (the Internet) and the 'actual' (on-site research study), which were used collaboratively to devise a multi-methodology that included an online survey; an on-site survey; and a small-scale ethnographic research study at a specifically designated art gallery. I also carried out a small auto-ethnography of my own experience of engaging with art galleries, museums and culture more generally. The purpose of this auto-ethnography was to position myself within the research so I could be a directly informed researcher. Through the acquisition of concurrent experiential and cognitive knowledge I accountably and visibly situated myself in relation to the structured and interpretive parameters of my research. Directly involving myself and my auto-ethnographical accounts also helped to explore, define and refine my theories.

The overall purpose of the research is for audience understanding, rather than

¹⁹ 'Bricolage' is evident in philosophy (Lévi-Strauss, 1962; Derrida, 1967; Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, 1988); educational research (Kincheloe and Berry, 2004); and Social Science research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2004).

audience development, through an inquiry of the experiential and 'dream space' narrative of the art gallery visitor and the transformation this provokes in the individual. The chosen research paradigm and integral methodology made it possible to 'analyse, pattern, classify and structure [the] data into models of visitor motivation, behaviour and response' (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2005: 9), and 'provide in-depth accounts of the museum experience' (Everett and Barrett, 2009:2). The methodology also contributed to accounting for the discrepancies of the 'hybrid-self' and the inconsistencies of human nature.

Designing the Research Paradigm

The definitions of, and approaches to, the integral components of the Social Science research paradigm have continually been developed, adapted and contested. There are many varied, alternative and sometimes conflicting versions of these components, which it would be impossible to expressly and expansively cover here. This is especially due to the blurred boundaries between them. Consequently I will provide a basic outline of the elements that are most directly relevant to my research, or provide a contextualisation of the paradigm I have adopted.

A paradigm is the theoretical perspective that presents a particular world-view (Charman, 2011; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Guba, 1990). A research paradigm consists of four distinct yet interrelated terms (taking into account slight variations of terminology amongst theorists): ontology, epistemology, methodology and ethics (axiology) (Creswell, 2009; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Ontology is concerned with the nature of being and the entity of 'reality'. It has been authoritatively described as a 'concept concerned with the existence of, and relationship between different aspects of society, such as social actors, cultural norms and social structures' (Jupp, 2006: 202). Examples of ontological theories include Realism, Idealism, Nominalism, Conceptualism, Relativism and Materialism (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011), as well as Critical Realism (Bhaskar, 1975; Collier, 1994).

Epistemology has been defined as a 'field of philosophy concerned with the

possibility, nature, sources and limits of human knowledge' (Jupp, 2006: 92). This is the element of the research paradigm that questions how we can know and study the reality that has been ascertained from selecting an ontological context. The main epistemological modes have been invariably categorised as Positivism, Postpositivism, Social Constructivism, Advocacy/Participatory, Pragmatism (Creswell, 2009); or Positivism, Postpositivism, Critical Theory, Constructivism and the Participatory paradigm (Guba and Lincoln in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 191 – 215). Both ontology and epistemology consist of a collective variation of complementary and opposing theories.

Relativism is the most strongly related ontological theory to my own research. It claims that reality is relative and subjective based on individual perception, and therefore recognises multiple constructed realities and experiential narratives – as found in the art gallery visitor experience. I also adopt a basic phenomenological approach to account for the contested fissures and disparities between ontological theories. Phenomenology is the pivotal mechanism between the physical entity of the external world and the internal subjective perception of the individual experiencing that world (pp. 80-83). This provides both the physical materiality of the world and the subjective mind of the individual with its own agency, whilst acknowledging that both change through a dynamic, dialogic process upon encountering each other.

For the purposes of my research I am adopting the epistemological paradigm of Constructivism – the concept that knowledge is an interpretive process developed within the human being when in contact with an external informative and potentially transformative resource, which creates meaning and contextualisation. Constructivism is closely associated with Interpretivism, both paradigms being aligned with the phenomenological concept of interaction between the human being and the world – creating, adopting and adapting patterns of meaning and interpretation to construct perceived reality (Mertens, 1998; Creswell 2009). The connection between the sensibilities of researchers in these two fields has been described as follows:

Proponents of these persuasions share the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it. This goal is variously spoken of as an abiding concern for the life world, for the emic point of view, for understanding meaning, for grasping the actor's definition of a situation, for Verstehen. The world of lived reality and situation-specific meanings that constitute the general object of investigation is thought to be constructed by social actors.

(Schwandt in Denzin and Lincoln, 1998: 118)

Whilst I am not investigating the direct social interaction between human beings, all research is intrinsically located in a social world. Therefore, the Constructivist epistemology I adopt is closely entwined with Social Constructivism and Social Constructionism. The latter of these two epistemologies originated from two seminal texts, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Mannheim, Berger and Luekmann, 1967) and *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), and has been developed more recently by other theorists (Creswell, 2009; Crotty, 1998; Lincoln and Guba in Lincoln and Guba, 2005; Neuman, 2000). The Social Constructionists believe that our knowledge of the world is created collaboratively and dynamically through social interaction, with a focus on the resulting 'artefacts' created in this productive alliance. The Social Constructivists are also interested in the changes made in the individual through this social process:

Social constructivists hold assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meaning of their experiences – meanings directed toward certain objects or things. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meaning into a few categories or ideas.

(Creswell, 2009: 8)

The Constructivist researcher situates her/himself in their research, whilst taking their background and experience into account. The researcher's identity and research findings are combined and used to understand and contextualise the

experience of others. This stance is associated with my research, where I will be bringing my understanding of Art History, Museum Education and Visitor Studies to the comprehension of the experience of others visiting the art gallery and engaging with paintings. I will also be further directly situating myself within the research through the implementation of auto-ethnography.

Theoretical Framework: re-storying the art gallery experience through Narrative Research and ‘messy method’

As museums are saturated in the collection, preservation and promotion of a ‘multivalent plurality of narratives and potential meanings’ (Charman, 2011: 59), Narrative Research was an effectively applicable theoretical framework for structuring my research. The use of Narrative Research, or Narrative Inquiry, is an operative approach to accounting for the multiplicity and fluidity of experiential entities, and is characterised in the following way:

Contemporary narrative inquiry can be characterized as an amalgam of interdisciplinary analytic lenses, diverse disciplinary approaches, and both traditional and innovative methods – all revolving around an interest in biographical particulars as narrated by the one who lives them.

(Chase, 2005: 651)

Narrative Inquiry has its history in the collection of life stories carried out by the Sociologists of the Chicago School in the 1920s and 1930s (Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou (2008: 3-4). The work of William Labov and Joshua Waletzky was correlated into an endorsement of the use of Narrative Research methods that provided a catalyst for the increased prevalence of this theoretical framework and research method (Labov and Waletzky, 1967). This text was pioneering as it presented the everyday life narrative of ‘ordinary’ people as worthy of research. Through their research and writings Labov and Waletzky identified five dominant sociolinguistic features of oral narratives (Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, 2008: 22-40; Chase 2005: 655; Labov and Waletzky, 1967):

- Orientation (actors, time, place and situation)
- Complication (the main body of the narrative where the action takes place)
- Evaluation (the point of the story)
- Resolution (the result of the action)
- Coda (returns the listener to the current moment)

There was also the additional feature of 'abstract', which is where the narrator would provide a brief synopsis of the story before providing the full account. The 'abstract' was a less evident element than the other five features and is therefore presented as an additional potential criteria rather than an essential one. Each of these features provides a mechanism for 're-storying' a particular experience or event, such as engaging with a painting on a visit to an art gallery.

For the purposes of this research, I use individual narratives to investigate the specific and collective experience of visiting the art gallery and engaging with paintings. Whilst I am not specifically interested in the 'syntax of storied events' but the 'semantics of narrated experience' (Squire in Andrew, Squire and Tamboukou, 2008), I will critique the language used to describe the event in reference to the experiential perspective of the participant. This elevates Narrative Research in respect of my own research as being 'experience-centred' – focalised on one specific experiential event of visiting the art gallery rather than a direct and independently autonomous account of an event. A hermeneutical 'conceptual technology' is provided for analysing stories (Ricoeur in Wood, 1991; Squire in Andrew, Squire and Tamboukou, 2008:41). The experience-centred narrative assumes that narratives:

- are sequential and meaningful
- are definitively human (for sense-making)
- represent, reconstruct and reconstitute experience, as well as express it.
- display transformation or change

The experiential narratives I collected for this research adopt these criteria, although they might not always be temporally sequential as participants sporadically focused on different aspects of the visit through thematic contextualisation. The most relevant aspect of this experience-centred narrative process is that the narrative will 'display transformation or change'. This outcome of the re-storying of experience will be related to the affective and emotive art gallery visitor experience to establish whether there is a 'turning point' (Denzin, 1989) from visiting the art gallery and engaging with paintings that could have an impact on mental health and emotional well-being.

Narrative Research provides a flexibility to account for the nuances and complexity of attempting to express experience through narrative whilst linguistically transcribing selfhood and identity. This is evident through the acknowledgement that there is not always a 'continuity and stability of narrative characterizations and patterns of selfhood' (Goodson, 2013: 112). The problematic nature of Narrative Research and narrative data is also evidentially acknowledged in the field due to contested definitions:

Narrative data can easily seem overwhelming: susceptible to endless interpretation, by turns inconsequential and deeply meaningful... Unlike many qualitative methods, narrative research offers no automatic starting or finishing points, Since the definition of 'narrative' itself is in dispute, there are no self-evident categories on which to focus as there are with content-based thematic approaches, or with analyses of specific elements of language.

(Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou (Eds.), 2008: 1)

Selfhood and identity within the construction of narrative are complex, multifaceted and changeable entities. It is not possible to define a single identity as consisting of a single component but instead consists of multiple and varied components materialised as the 'hybrid-self'. This hybrid-self is represented in the world by the cultivation of identity, which is often susceptible to 're-selfing', described by Ivor Goodson:

Re-selfing refers to the capacity to generate new visions of selfhood in response to life transitions. This capacity allows a flexible response and a practiced facility to develop new courses of action when the context of a life changes significantly as through say redundancy, illness, retirement or bereavement.

(Goodson, 2013)

Despite the fragmentation of identity and selfhood formed by the notions of the hybrid-self, we endeavour to seek continuity of the human existence of the individual through the implementation of narrative with the 'phenomenological assumption that experience can, through stories, become part of consciousness' (Squire in Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, 2008: 41). Therefore, any adaptations created through hybridity and re-selfing are considered conducive to an alteration in the narrative but not a discontinuation and commencement of a new one (p. 83). With an awareness of these labyrinthine concepts, I am interested in the temporally and contextually located art gallery experience. This assumes that identifying the complexity of human identity and perspective is adequate for accounting for narratives being cultivated and un-replicable but also accumulative.

We make sense of our own lives, and contextualise it within relation to others and the wider world, through creating our own personal narrative or story. This helps us to define our identity and make sense of the world around us and our place in it. Within this we also make sub-stories of specific encounters and experiences for the purposes of contextualisation and linguistically for expression to others. This is increasingly the case with technological advancement and more people using social media to share their thoughts, ideas and expressions of identity. These could be termed as 'self-narratives', to differentiate them from the external narratives created about other people or events. The self-narrative is the formulation of an autobiographical story consisting of memory, cognitive acquisition, experience, opinion and imagination. Whilst the self-narrative is organically manifested progressively over time it is not always coherent or tangible. Self-narrative is continuously developing, adapting and altering – it is a malleable, fluid pastiche of both physical and psychological life, which in turn also changes our perception and

experience of the world around us. The self-narrative is always present yet always changeable, it informs and alters life. On the visit to an art gallery the self-narrative will inform the experience, whilst also being transformed by the experience. This is situated strongly within the realms of phenomenology.

From the perspective of being a researcher using Narrative Research to construct my thesis there were a list of definitions that needed to be considered when collecting other people's stories and creating my own. These include the following:²⁰

Adequacy	Aesthetic finality
Accessibility	Authenticity
Believability	Closure
Credibility	Compellingness
Continuity	Explanatory power
Fidelity	Moral persuasiveness
Positionality of researcher	Moral purpose
Emplotment (fidelity-believability; obligation, empathy)	Artistic creativity
Persuasive voice	Moral experience

The narrative that participants use to contextualise and express their experience of engaging with paintings is based within their own personal linguistic style and their approach to speaking about art (Bruder and Uck, 2011). The 'power of narrative' in our experience of the world and subsequent expression of these experiences has been widely adopted across various disciplines and media (TED, 2013), thus pertinent for my inter-disciplinary research study.

My research will use narrative as data and as resulting thesis through 'interpretive repertoires' (Hooper-Greenhill et al, 2001) as provided by the researcher and the participants. Both the researcher and participants adopt the role of author,

²⁰ List provided by Barbara Cole (2011) for the use in a doctoral research seminar at the Institute of Education, University of London.

reinstating and reinventing the author following the demise as surmised by Roland Barthes (1968). Through phenomenological perspective and redefinition, the author becomes integrally important and applicable to the creation and appreciation of experiential life narratives – the participant as the experience-centred narrator and as the *bricoleur* who produces an interpretive *montage* of social phenomena (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 4-5). The theoretical framework of Narrative Research provides an opportunity to cultivate and structure these narratives through seeing ‘different and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning, to bring them into useful dialogue with each other, and to understand more about individual and social change’ through stimulating ‘multilevel, dialogical potential’ (Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, 2008, 1-2).

There has been an acknowledged appreciation of the limitations of the use of language to describe the experience of art, with the idea that the experience of art cannot be effectively translated. Clifford Geertz proclaimed the limitations of language, whilst acknowledging how the experience of art is still a catalyst for writing, or verbalising, about its affective qualities (Geertz, 1976). Gadamer was also aware of the tension in his own theory, which produces a ‘double hermeneutic movement’, where the artwork is seen in the singular but then contextualised under a broad consideration of subject-matter. Gadamer’s philosophy ‘recognises that the cognitive dimension of aesthetic experience is like all linguistic experience, both centrifugal and centripetal in nature’ (Davey, 2011: 16). Despite the complexities of using language, and the differing linguistic capacity of individuals to describe experience, it is still the most effective approach to gaining insight into the visitor perception of their experience of engaging with art galleries and paintings. It will therefore be used as the main expressive, methodological tool for my research. Through my research I am adopting the basic principles of Narrative Research without adhering to the rigour of the structured theoretical framework. The critical approach of the framework ‘is one means by which researchers may access rich accounts of the multi-faceted nature of audience relationships with museums’, hence a legitimate approach to investigating my particular focus (Everett and Barrett, 2009: 2). As we live a ‘storied existence’ through existing as ‘storied beings’ who live ‘storied lives’ (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Cole, 2011;

Goodson 2013), the collection and analysis of narrative will provide a rich source for informing and shaping my research.²¹

Within the parameters of Narrative Research I adhere to certain semantical constructs for the coherent analysis of experiential data. A particular example of this is the constructed dichotomy of 'positive' and 'negative' to describe experience, whilst acknowledging the complexity and spectrum of language and experience that extends beyond the confines of these terms (p. 74). When I refer to 'positive' and 'negative' emotions or affective encounters in my research, this does not imply the overall experience is necessarily 'positive' or 'negative'. Instead positive is translated as affective or emotional affirmation or stabilisation (of mental health and well-being) through such emotions as happiness, relaxation or calm. Negative emotional or affective encounters are considered as a destabilisation (of mental health and well-being), such as when overwhelmed, confused, anxious or disturbed. The terms positive, affirmative or stabilised, and negative or destabilised, will be used interchangeably in these instances. However, if I am referring to the overall experience of the visit to the art gallery and I use the terminology 'positive' or 'negative' this is an analytical deduction of the visitor's perceived impression of the overall experience. In summary, having what might be defined as 'negative' emotions – such as anger or sadness – does not necessarily deem the whole encounter negative, as long as it is possible for the individual to contextualise the encounter and use it for advantageous purpose, such as self-awareness, personal development or catharsis. If the 'negative' element does supersede the impact of the overall experience then the overall experiential outcome will be negative.

Due to the variable, fluid and intangible nature of the components involved in my research 'messy method' (Law, 2004, 2007; Law and Urry, 2004) was adopted to collect experiential data and complement the theoretical framework of Narrative Research. As is the case in any research, there are always positive and negative aspects to any chosen method. 'Messy method' aims to most expressively capture

²¹ Barbara Cole's reference to 'storied beings' and 'storied lives' was made in a seminar and the associated literature at the Institute of Education, University of London, as part of the doctoral research process (2011).

data through a variety of methods to account for the variability, fluidity, intangibility and slippage as expansively as possible. Through this method, Social Science 'is about creating metaphors and images for what is impossible or barely possible, unthinkable or almost unthinkable' (Law, 2004: 6). As part of this theoretical framework Law defines the world, our experience of the world and ourselves in the following way:

Slippery, indistinct, elusive, complex, diffuse, messy, textured, vague, unspecific, confused, disordered, emotional, painful, pleasurable, hopeful, horrific, lost, redeemed, visionary, angelic, demonic, mundane, intuitive, sliding and unpredictable... Each is a way of trying to open space for the indefinite. Each is way of apprehending or appreciating displacement. Each is a possible image of the world, of our experience of the world, and indeed of ourselves. But so too is their combination... together they are a way of pointing to and articulating a sense of the world as an unformed but generative flux of forces and relations that work to produce particular realities.

(Law, 2004: 6)

In summary, my Constructivist-Interpretivist, Relativist, multi-methodological qualitative research study, within the theoretical framework of Narrative Research, will most effectively be structured and substantiated through the adoption of the disordered and manifold embodiment of 'messy method' that sees the world as a complex and fluid entity.

Museum Visitor Studies

My research paradigm is situated within the theoretical and practical context of Museum Visitor Studies. Early examples of Museum Visitor Studies (MVS) were born from behavioural and psychological studies combined with a desire to learn more about visitors to museums (Robinson, 1928). These early examples of studies in the first half of the 20th century were an unusual example of a field that was not generally ingrained in the practices of the cultural sector until approximately the 1970s in the UK. This began predominantly with footfall and

has resulted most recently in the more expansive segmentation of visitor profiles based on the general human experience of the world – the ‘contextual turn’ that ‘places visitors’ experiences within a holistic and long-term framework of individual life circumstances, relationships, and trajectories’ (Dawson and Jensen, 2011). Through the development of MVS, the visitor is represented as a hybrid-self – an identity composed of varying expectations, motivations, needs, and experiential and cognitive outcomes – that needs to be assessed and evaluated to understand and develop the visitor experience. This is aligned with the comparable presentation of hybrid-self in Narrative Research. It is the understanding of the affective experience of the self within the context of the art gallery that is the focus of my research and is hence based on a strong foundation of MVS. My research is particularly informed by the research and theory of the renowned ‘cultural and strategy research agency’, Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (MHM) (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre website, n.d.).

Cultural organisations are required to verify their success, effectiveness and impact – if a museum is able to prove that they are engaging with a wide number of visitors across a diverse spectrum they will more effectively be able to substantiate their role within society and acquire funding from relevant bodies. Museum mission statements suggest they also want to cultivate a purposeful, engaging, inspiring, educational and recreational experience for visitors. Due to this it is important to research visitor experiences, to assess current practice and inform future development. MVS also attempts to determine who is not visiting cultural organisations and the reasons for this. Visitors are an undifferentiated homogenous group that need to be evaluated and assessed in an attempt to create more determinate understanding. New and innovative approaches to MVS are constantly being developed by cultural organisations, as well as by consultants and researchers. Development of MVS includes the methodologies employed in the evaluation of the visitor experience; the approach to the way visitors are profiled, categorised or segmented; and the elements of the visitor and their experience that are being assessed and evaluated.

The earliest form of widely used approaches to MVS was based on head-counting

or footfall, purely for the purpose of assessing the number of visitors who came through the door of a museum. Approaches to MVS have been drastically developed since this time, including: assessing spend per head; satisfaction surveys; target groups; and measuring learning (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2005). The 21st century introduced a more comprehensive and expansive approach to MVS, as particularly instigated by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (MHM). The new approach MHM introduced was defined as ‘meaningful models’ of visitor research to begin a transformation ‘from basic market research to rich, challenging, visitor insight’ (MHM, 2005: 8). This is achieved through using data to create models for assessing motivation, behaviour and response. MHM proceeded by developing an approach to evaluation beyond just learning outcomes, which has gradually increased in prevalence. MHM have used a theoretical approach to quantitative and qualitative research to produce ‘real-world strategies to help museums and galleries develop new and existing audiences’ (MHM, 2005: 9).

One of MHM’s most significant contributions to MVS for the purposes of my research is a ‘Hierarchy of Visitor Engagement’, which broadly segments visitor engagement into four main categories – Social, Intellectual, Emotional and Spiritual (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2005). These categories are then each sub-divided into more descriptive and specific terms that define the visitor experience of engagement. The associated report uses a table to juxtapose this hierarchy with that of Abraham Maslow’s ‘Hierarchy of Needs’, first introduced in 1943 (Maslow, 2013) and also included in other literature dedicated to visitor engagement (Black, 2005). Maslow’s hierarchy is based on Developmental Psychology, which is the scientific study of human development with a particular emphasis on psychological and emotional aspects and perception. The juxtaposition made by MHM automatically infers that the ‘Hierarchy of Visitor Engagement’ falls within the category of ‘human needs’, thus elevating the status of visiting museums and galleries. A major shift of focus from the independent practice of the museum to an emphasis on the needs and motivations of visitors is demonstrated by this ‘hierarchy’ – one of the most significant changes in the history of the practice and research of museums.

Graham Black also makes use of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to set out methods for approaching audience-focussed practice, informing the shift with insightful concepts for development (Black, 2005). Under the auspices of Black the change is asserted as a 'more audience-centred role' in contrast to the prior purpose of the museum being a 'repository and display facility for objects largely reflective of middle-class, western values worthily made available to the public'. Museums 'cease to be product-led and become audience-centred in approach' (Black, 2005). There is an evident shift from the didactic or educational museum to the more encompassing 'engaging' (Black, 2005) and 'responsive' (Lang, Reeve and Woollard, 2006) museum.

As pioneers of MVS, MHM provide an abundance of insightful assessment that substantiates and informs my research. For example, MHM discovered that the visitor perception of having a 'spiritual' experience was more prevalent in art galleries than in museums. It also transpired in MHM's research that the comparison between the expectations of the visitor versus the outcome after the visiting experience increased for the 'spiritual' and 'emotional' elements of experience, whilst actually decreasing for the 'intellectual' and 'social' elements (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2005). This suggests the expectation for a visitor to a museum is to have an intellectual and social visit. Whilst these expectations might be met, the overall subsequent outcome of the visit is in contrast to the initial motivations due to emotional and spiritual emphasis.

MHM have also contributed to the segmentation of visitors to cultural organisations. Following the instigation of the engaged and responsive museum at the beginning of 21st century, visitor profiling has increasingly been considered an effective and efficient approach to audience research and engagement. This has included identifying different types of learners and visitors based on motivations (Falk and Dierking, 2006), to the more recent segmentation of different types of person who visit cultural establishments based on overall 'cultural values' (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2013). The 'contextual turn' has recently led Morris Hargreaves McIntyre to re-address the topic of visitor segmentation with a new innovative research programme. 'Culture Segments' aims to 'provide the sector

with a shared language for understanding the audience with a view to targeting them more accurately, engaging them more deeply, and building lasting relationships' (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2013: 3). This is carried out through focussing on the type of person, rather than just on their role as a visitor, by being 'based on people's cultural values and motivations' as well as identifying their 'deeply-held beliefs about the role that art and culture play in their lives' (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2013: 3). The segments were informed by the data collected through 'Audience Atlas UK' and are described as: enrichment, entertainment, expression, perspective, stimulation, affirmation, release and essence (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2013).

Other recent visitor segmentation research directly associated with the art gallery claims that those who have the 'strongest background in art studies' are 'most emotionally connected to art' – substantiating the argument for knowledge providing an emotive encounter (Pitman and Hirzy, 2011). This upholds the 18th century, Formalist and Bourdieuan (pp. 126-130) assertions that are in opposition to my own inquiry where I aim to investigate the emotive, visceral power of paintings beyond the factual. However, there is a strong link between different facets of knowledge and experience, as '[c]ommunication with a work of art is, of course, often a multidimensional experience, one that integrates the visual with the emotional and the intellectual' (Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson, 1990: 62). The multi-faceted experience consists of the perceptual dimension; the emotional dimension; the intellectual dimension and communicative response (Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson, 1990). This is based on the 'relativism' (Armstrong, 2005) of the intellectual and emotional capacity of the visitor, and does not preclude an affective or emotive experience occurring in spite of limited factual information. It does though endorse the concept of 'emotionally-tinged learning' (Dwyer, 2011: 3).

Another example of evaluating visitors is through categorisation of the visiting social dynamic – whether a visitor attends alone or with others (e.g. a partner, friend, family, school/university/tour/social group). The visiting dynamic in Museum Visitor Studies has often been based on the sociality of visitors of pairs or

groups (e.g. Falk and Dierking, 2000; Hooper-Greenhill et al, 2001; Tsvi and Dim, 2013) and the interpretive communities these dynamics provide (Hooper-Greenhill et al, 2001; Kirchberg, 2010). There is recent research that argues for the significance of unaccompanied visits, claiming that an encounter with art is more affective and immersive when visiting an exhibition alone (Tröndle quoted in Spears, 2012). Whilst the social visit is credible and enriching in its own right this claim substantiates my own research that extends our comprehension and the significance of the unaccompanied, unaided visitor experience.

Current visitor research emphasises assessment of the quality and value of engaging with culture – to which my research contributes. These research projects (e.g. Annabel Jackson Associates, 2012; AHRC, 2013) aim to elevate the subjectivity and individuality of the visitor experience whilst also creating a transferable and inclusive approach to visitor/participant research. The development of subjectivity in MVS has been a catalyst for an increased emphasis on affectivity, mental health and well-being, including using technology as a pivotal methodological device to instigate an investigation into the role of art galleries in these fields (Binnie, 2010; DiPaola, Riebe and Enns, 2010; eMotion website, n.d.; Neault, 2013; Quiroga and Pedreira, 2010). Recent research into well-being (Chatterjee and Noble, 2013; Fears, 2009; Thomson and Chatterjee, 2013), provides further insight into the role of museums, art galleries and collections as a therapeutic and remedial resource.

The increase in attempts to research and assess the role of cultural organisations in the promotion of positive mental health and well-being has led UCL to launch the ‘UCL Museum Wellbeing Measures Toolkit’ (Thomson and Chatterjee, 2013), which provides guidance and ‘a set of scales of measurement used to assess levels of wellbeing arising from participation in museum and gallery activities’ (Thomson and Chatterjee, 2013: 3). With an acknowledgement of varying elements of well-being, this particular toolkit focuses on the mood and emotion of individuals as ‘these aspects of wellbeing are the ones that are more likely to change as a result of a short intervention, such as participating in a museum or gallery activity’ (Thomson and Chatterjee, 2013: 3). The development of the evaluation toolkit was based on the clinical affect scales of the Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule

(PANAS) for psychological wellbeing (Watson, Clark and Tellegen, 1988) and the Visual Analogue Scales (VAS) for subjective wellness and happiness (EuroQol Group, 1990) – a credible methodology used elsewhere (e.g. Chatterjee, 2008) but that I dismissed due to its prescriptive strictures. Due to the increased role of mental health and well-being in the cultural sector there was a need for an accessible and functional evaluative methodology that could easily and effectively be used. UCL have contributed to this requirement through providing an evaluative approach to assessing complex, fluid and intangible entities such as mental health, emotion and well-being.

My research is based on the aforementioned foundation of Museum Visitor Studies following the contextual turn. It is also associated with the increased emphasis on the subjective, holistic and visceral elements of the visitor experience, as well as an interest in identifying and promoting the ‘value’ of culture and the arts. Through the collection and analysis of experiential narratives I will expand on the evaluation of subjective experience, affect and the emotionally engaged experience through more in-depth and comprehensive inquiry. This will extend understanding of the roles of mental health and well-being within this current cultural context.

Methodology

The methodology for my research is located within the fields of Social Science and Museum Visitor Studies. In both these fields, the defining design of a research project is determined by the use of a quantitative, qualitative or mixed-method approach. Whilst the fields of quantitative and qualitative research are distinct they can also be related to yield robust and comprehensive data. Although these two methods have often been positioned in dichotomous opposition (Carr, 1995 in Denzin and Lincoln; Hammersley, 2006; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998) they are arguably most effectively considered commensurately – not as polar opposites or dichotomies but as representing different ends of a continuum (Charman, 2011; Creswell, 2009; Newman and Benz, 1998). This is embraced most emphatically through the mixed-method approach, which utilises both the quantitative and

qualitative to investigate the same phenomena but through their respective methodological procedures. Museum Visitor Studies also provides a reconciliation of these two terms through employing interdisciplinary theory and multi-methodological practice, as is seen in the research principles of Morris Hargreaves McIntyre that is applicable to my research:

Traditional sector research makes a distinction between qualitative and quantitative research. Quantitative surveys are robust but limited in scope. Qualitative techniques produce rich, but unquantifiable insights.

Our approach deliberately breaks down this artificial divide. The bridge between these two types of research is modelling. Essentially, we gather as many qualitative responses as possible using a battery of techniques, some we have devised ourselves. We then analyse, pattern, classify and structure this data into models of visitor motivation, behaviour and response.

(Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2005: 9)

Quantitative research is considered to pre-date the prolific use of qualitative methods that had an amplified application originating in the 1980s (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Marsland, Wilson, Abeyasekera and Kleih, 2000). Quantitative methods employ observation and experiments to produce quantifiable data, measurements and statistics in a controlled environment. Qualitative methods employ techniques that facilitate the collection of semantical, rather than numerical, data to analyse and comprehend an element of social phenomena, as seen in interviews for example. My research will be qualitative-centric through the utilisation of narratives and linguistics. There will also be a quantitative element through the application and analysis of surveys used as part of the research methodology to provide an accessible account of certain more fundamental elements of the data.

My research remains closer to qualitative research on the continuum and I do not deem myself as inherently adopting quantitative or multi-method research overall. Or to be visibly inclusive of the remotely quantitative aspect of my methodology, I

would situate my research as multi-method with a qualitative bias. For the purposes of this section of the thesis I will focus on the emphasised approach of qualitative research, as defined in the following way:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasize the value-laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning.

(Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 3 and 8)

Within this qualitative-centric framework I will be using emerging methods and interpreting rich data to identify themes and patterns, as is synonymous with the qualitative methodology. This will be achieved through carrying out a tripartite research methodology in the form of a survey (online and on-site), a small-scale ethnographic research study and an auto-ethnography. The 'messy' multi-methodological approach will formulate an effectual account of a complex area of research. Whilst the specifics of my particular methodology will be demonstrated in a subsequent section of this thesis, I will provide a brief overview of these three approaches.

The survey is developed from a quantitative method that 'provides quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population' (Creswell, 2009: 145). Despite the quantitative ethos of surveys, I used this method in my research as a 'strategy of inquiry' (Creswell, 2005) for predominantly qualitative

purposes. The Internet was employed for my research as an active medium to organically disseminate the survey as widely as possible. This online survey provided general insight into the experience of art galleries and paintings for the purpose of establishing a foundation for the affective and emotive encounter to substantiate my subsequent research. An adapted and extended version of this survey was subsequently carried out on-site at the specific gallery chosen for my ethnographic research study to provide a general overview of the experience of visitors. The on-site survey also provided supplementary information to the small sample size of participants in the ethnographic research study.

The small-scale ethnographic research study was carried out at a specific site to develop an understanding of the art gallery visitor experience, engagement with paintings and possible presence of attributes of mental health and well-being. The ethnographic stance was adopted due to 'its commitment to direct experience with a population or community of concern. It is this continuous exposure and engagement with a research setting, rather than the specifics of the methodology alone, that distinguishes ethnography from other research approaches' (Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte, 2012: 2). The process of ethnography is considered as being flexible and evolving contextually in the field, reflexively to the lived realities encountered, as was evident in my own research (Creswell, 2009; LeCompte and Schensul, 2010). Through this in-depth process with a small sample size I was able to expound the information gathered from the survey and collect detailed narratives. From the rich textual data it was possible to locate emerging themes and patterns through the process of 'coding' – that is 'the process of organising material into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to the information (Rossman and Rallis, 1998, p. 171). It involves taking text data or pictures gathered during data collection, segmenting sentences (or paragraphs) or images into categories, and labelling those categories with a term, often a term based in the actual language of the participant (called an *in vivo* term)' (Creswell, 2009: 186). Through this process I would develop the codes, which are defined as 'names or symbols used to stand for a group of similar items, ideas or phenomena that the researcher has noticed in his or her data set' (LeCompte and Schensul, 2012: 121). Codes must be operational, recognisable and functional. In my

research the codes were based on emerging information collected from participant experiential narratives and also as present in the associated literature. These codes would be 'clustered' together to form themes that would be potentially applicable to the experience of engaging with paintings in the art gallery generally.

The auto-ethnographic element of the research methodology was inspired by the concept of self-narrative as devised by early diarists, 'Ladies of Letters' and the 'blue stockings'. It is also reminiscent of the conception of the female flâneuse, who has been deemed as absent, or at least inferiorly present, from the development of the male flâneur (Baudelaire, 1964, originally 1863; Benjamin, 1983, originally c. 1938) in social representations of experiencing the city and the world from the mid-19th century onwards (D'Souza and McDonough, 2008). As part of the research, I wanted to represent myself as the 'visible flâneuse', who could share my own experiential narrative of the cultural sphere that would also inform and influence my understanding and interpretation of the experience of the participants in my research. Through auto-ethnographic positioning the self and the other 'presuppose one another' and 'stand in a dialectical relationship', whilst providing a 'legitimate way of establishing intersubjectivity that escapes the false dichotomy opposing objectivism and subjectivism' (Roth, 2005: 2-6). This combined approach of merging ethnographic interests and auto-ethnographic life stories provides an opportunity for my thesis to 'tell about a culture' of visiting art galleries 'at the same time it tells about a life' (Roth, 2005: 4).

Participants

Predominantly I am not interested in the socio-economic or ethnic background of participants so this will not be included in my research. My research highlights the experience above all other information so will solely focus on this, apart from where relevant or useful contextual comment has been made by an individual about their background. The research into socio-economic, professional and ethnic background has already been considered in many other research studies and the on-going evaluation carried out by cultural organisations. I could not legitimately or beneficially expand on this extensive research focus in this thesis. Also, I am not assessing learning outcomes for the purpose of my research so will only highlight

learning as an outcome when it is related generally to the experience of visiting the art gallery and engaging with paintings.

Due to this I will not be taking a sociological approach to my research, or situating it within a Marxist context, as it is not relevant. I also believe there is a difficulty of talking about paintings that is not the preserve of one specific 'group'. Although I shall not be adopting a sociological stance, it is important to provide an acknowledgement of the work of Pierre Bourdieu, which has been so significant in this field. Through Sociology Bourdieu has asserted that the appreciation of culture and the arts is based primarily on a certain level of education, social class and experience that provides an individual with the 'cultural capital' with which to most effectively and beneficially engage:

Sociology endeavours to establish the conditions in which the consumers of cultural goods, and their taste for them, are produced, and at the same time to describe the different ways of appropriating such of these objects as are regarded at a particular moment as works of art, and the social conditions of the constitution of the mode of appropriation that is considered legitimate.

(Bourdieu, 1979: 1)

Through the Bourdieuan conception of education, knowledge and taste, the identity of an individual and their 'social class' is defined by the particular choices they make in the consumption of all commodities. This includes the commodities of culture and the arts in which 'art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfil a social function of legitimating social differences' (Bourdieu, 1979: 7). Whilst explaining the sociological construction of cultural experience Bourdieu also exacerbates the elitist perception of only being able to fully appreciate culture and art if one has the appropriate resources, or capital, gained through class and education:

Consumption is, in this case, a stage of a process in communication, that is, an act of deciphering, decoding, which presupposes practical or explicit mastery of a cipher or code. In a

sense, one can say that the capacity to see (*voir*) is a function of the knowledge (*savoir*), or concepts, that is, the words, that are available to name visible things, and which are, as it were, programmes for perception. A work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded.

(Bourdieu, 1979: 2)

Bourdieu states that those who do not have the capital (i.e. class, education and hence knowledge and experience) to decipher the codes are limited to appreciation of only Panofsky's 'sensible properties', or 'the emotional resonances aroused by these properties' (Bourdieu, 1979: 2). This sociological perception of the experience of culture and art is evident throughout Bourdieu's oeuvre (e.g. 1979, 1991, 1993), with particular reference to the experience of paintings. Bourdieu extensively accounts for his thesis that education and knowledge is needed to decipher the codes within paintings and to effectively appropriate them within the context of the given contemporary socio-cultural climate (1993). He believes that this is constructed through the cultivation of the academisation of the production of art and the reflexive academisation of the appreciation of art, which he argues was challenged by the work of Édouard Manet and the Impressionists. Bourdieu believed that the 'experience of the work of art as being immediately endowed with meaning and value is a result of the accord between the two mutually founded aspects of the same historical institution: the *cultural habitus* and the *artistic field*', which exists if apprehended by a spectator possessing the appropriate disposition and aesthetic competence (Bourdieu, 1993: 257). Hence, according to Bourdieu, it is the '*aesthete's eye*' that constitutes the work of art as a work of art.

Bourdieu carried out research in an art gallery that informed and substantiated his affirmed connection between education and the appreciation of art. The research intended to 'devise a systematic survey of the European museum-going public, its social and educational characteristics, its attitudes to museums and its artistic preferences, as a process of verification aimed at confronting a coherent system of theoretical propositions with a coherent system of facts produced by – and not for

– the hypothesis which it was necessary to validate’ (Bourdieu, 1991: 5). From this research Bourdieu drew significant claims. It was determined that the time spent in an art gallery increased with the level of education, which he perceived was based on ‘a defined and limited capacity for apprehending the ‘information’ proposed by the work’, as informed by the level of cultural capital and access to the required code:

The time a visitor devotes to contemplating the works on display, in other words the time needed for him or her to ‘exhaust’ the meanings proposed to him or her, is without doubt a useful indication of his or her ability to decipher and appreciate these meanings: the inexhaustibility of the ‘message’ means that the richness of ‘reception’ (measured, roughly, by its length) depends primarily on the competence of the ‘receiver’, in other words on the degree to which he or she can master the code of the ‘message’.

(Bourdieu, 1991: 38)

However, what was even more significant was that the ‘cultural level of aspiration’ was actually more important than gained qualifications, as those who had not attained such a high level of formal education were more likely to claim a higher cultural level. This was also supplemented by the emergence of visiting patterns and behaviour that were ‘directly and almost exclusively’ related to education. Those with less formal education were likely to claim they had spent longer at the art gallery than they actually had, compared to those with a higher level of formal education – which to Bourdieu indicated a desire to conform to a certain level of social convention and cultural aspiration, creating a normalisation based on ‘legitimate practice’ (Bourdieu, 1991: 37-38). In fact, the claim to a higher level of education was also perceived by those within the category of ‘middle class’ respondents, so self-perception and a desire to provide a certain perspective is actually applicable across all visitors or sociological groups. It is claimed that cultural experience and need is self-perpetuating – the more you engage with culture the more you ‘need’ to engage with culture, which could be applicable to anyone.

Whilst I cannot dismiss the role of education and experience in the production of knowledge and comprehension, it is exactly the 'emotional resonances' that Bourdieu denounces which I believe provide an accessible route to engaging with paintings for everyone, and which I am elevating the significance of over the Bourdieuan educationally defined 'cultural code'. I also aim to extend a more expansive encouragement of the 'the act of empathy, *Einfühlung*', that Bourdieu believes is a privilege of the educated and cultivated, to claim it as a resource for all those who engage with paintings (Bourdieu, 1979: 3). This will disseminate more widely the 'ownership of the means of appropriation of cultural goods' and make more accessible the previously monopolised 'manipulation of cultural goods and the institutional signs of cultural salvation', as paraphrased from Weber (Bourdieu, 1991: 113). Along with the more recent contribution by Tony Bennett (2009), these texts indicate that visitors generally visit museums to confirm and validate their cultural capital, and are usually degree educated. My research does not take that approach, moving beyond some of these restrictive sociological studies of audiences for art by providing a more expansive, contextual definition of audiences and substantiating greater potential accessibility. The most significant differentiation of my research and the present museological context is that museum visitors of the 21st century are very different to those of Bourdieu's time – they are a much more multifarious entity, whilst those who fall into the sociological category of being 'degree educated' are also more expansive and diverse.

The background of respondents to the online survey for my research was completely unknown due to the organic nature of distribution through the Internet and social media, and the anonymous process of responding to the survey. For the on-site survey the participants were visitors to a specific art gallery and were not asked about their backgrounds. For the small-scale ethnographic survey participants had to be elected in advance so more about their background is known, and this also came up in the interview process when they spoke about their knowledge and experience of art galleries and paintings. The project leader of the 'eMotion: mapping museum experience' research project carried out in Switzerland, Tröndle, observed that there was actually 'little difference in

engagement between visitors with a proficient knowledge of art and “people who are engineers and dentists” (Tröndle quoted in Spears, 2012). This assertion provides a significant discovery that substantiates the redundancy of evaluating the professional and educational background of participants, as the process of experience, engagement and expression can be variable across all socio-cultural, educational, professional and ethnic backgrounds.

It is also worth emphasising that the focus of this research is on the experience of the solo, unaccompanied visitor to the art gallery, hence there is an attempt to avoid unnecessary social interference. Despite this focus it is not possible to completely dislocate the individual from a social context due to the social nature of the world and human experience. For example, simply by visiting an art gallery you are entering a social sphere, inhabited by other individuals. Through the methodological process participants in the gallery and on the Internet are using language – a tool for expression, communication and social interaction. Participants in the on-site survey and small-scale ethnographic study took part in direct human social interaction. Even the less obvious elements of the experience have an element of sociality – the website for the art gallery that the participants personally chose to look at before their visit was created by other individuals for the purpose of human consumption, as with the curation of the gallery. This social capital, or social footprints, cannot be avoided but it was deemed that the methodological approach chosen was sufficient for the purposes of my research study. The ethnographic study in particular was based on the unaccompanied visitor experience, and as each participant went on a self-led tour this replicated the real-world experience of visiting an art gallery alone. It would not be useful or effective to attempt to create a research environment that does not replicate naturalistic human experience. The methodological parameters are based on the ‘authentic’ experience of the unaccompanied visitor to an art gallery with accountability for the environment and social aspects already in place.

Venue

The Guildhall Art Gallery in the City of London was chosen as the venue to carry out the on-site survey and small-scale ethnographic research study. This was due

to various contributing factors. Firstly, I had already met the Principal Curator of the Guildhall Art Gallery and believed she would be both accommodating of the research and interested in the study. I also hoped the study would be of some benefit to the gallery in understanding how visitors engage with the gallery and its collections. The Principal Curator and other colleagues at the gallery were very kind, accommodating and happy for me to carry out my research there, not to mention actively assisting in the research process.

Another reason for choosing the Guildhall Art Gallery as a venue was due to the type of environment it provided. The space was physically sufficient for the study without being too large or overwhelming – giving participants the opportunity to look around within specific time parameters set for realistically carrying out the study and analysing the data. It was decided 30 minutes was long enough for participants to spend experiencing the art gallery without putting off potential participants from being involved due to the process being too time-consuming. This time period was used as a constant with all the participants. With the acknowledgement that people naturally take different amounts of time visiting an art gallery, having a finite visit time made the research project temporally manageable for both the research process and the participants. The temporal factor of the methodology is substantiated by Davey (2005), who asserts that interest levels of museum visitors generally naturally decline after 30 minutes. A designated visiting time also provided a framework to explore experiential aspects of the visit, such as how many paintings would be focused on in a specific time period.

The Guildhall Art Gallery is quieter than many of the major art galleries in London, giving participants the opportunity for a more reflective and immersive experience without too many imposing external distractions, such as crowds of people. Whilst it could be argued that this is providing a contrived and overly controlled environment that is not typical of many galleries it was deemed appropriate and beneficial for this research. I am not suggesting that it is only possible to have an affective and emotionally engaged experience in a quiet and uncrowded art gallery, but hoped that by using this type of environment it would provide the most

productive atmosphere for the research study whilst also adhering to the reality of a general gallery visiting experience outside of the research.

The Guildhall Art Gallery shows a changing display of artworks from its vast collection of paintings, drawings and sculpture. There is also a programme of temporary exhibitions that change approximately every few months. Many of the paintings are Victorian artworks, whilst there is also a Sir Matthew Smith (1879-1959) collection that was bequeathed to the gallery. Unusually the Guildhall Art Gallery has the remains of a Roman amphitheatre underneath, though this was not used as part of the study as it was not relevant and provided an unusual and conflicting environment. Otherwise participants were allowed to explore the entirety of the gallery, except for the temporary exhibition as this was not always paintings or available during the research process. It is acknowledged that due to subjective predilection the collection of paintings at the Guildhall Art Gallery might not be to everyone's personal taste, being predominantly Victorian. However, it was hoped that this would be useful in providing a varied collection of responses with a focus on traditional paintings, whilst providing emerging overarching themes that could be applicable to the experience of different art galleries and types of paintings.

The Guildhall Art Gallery is a civic building and part of the City of London Corporation's premises. The actual gallery building is a relatively recent addition (though the oldest part of the building, apart from the amphitheatre, does date back to c. 1411), having been opened in 1999. The original gallery was first built on a slightly different site in 1885 to house the City of London Corporation's growing art collection. This original gallery was badly damaged during an air raid in 1941. Following the use of a temporary structure to display some of the collection it was decided in 1985 to build a new purpose-built construction on the present site. During excavation for the building the remains of the Roman amphitheatre were discovered so it was decided to incorporate this into the building, with the gallery opening in 1999 and the amphitheatre in 2002. The space was specifically designated for the purpose of displaying art, although the building and other rooms within GAG are also frequently used for events and ceremonies for the City

of London Corporation, and associated committees and guilds. As the City of London Corporation is an established and historical Local Authority the art gallery has been built accordingly to reflect its status, ethos and purpose. Due to this the physical environment of the art gallery and the impact it has on visitors could be associated with this architectural identity and hence be different to other public art galleries. This does not mean that this will be detrimental to the research or the visitors experience but provide an opportunity to explore the impact of the physical environment and ambience on visitor engagement, whilst extracting identifiable, replicable themes for the experience of other art galleries.

The Guildhall Art Gallery has previously been used as the site for researching the impact of visiting an art gallery on stressed workers (Clow and Fredhoi, 2006) – with the outcome demonstrating ‘that a brief lunchtime visit to an art gallery had substantial influences on both the subjective experience of stress as well as levels of the stress hormone cortisol’. Whilst this could be indicative of any form of activity or space that adhered to the principles of Attention Restoration Theory (Kaplan, Bardwell and Slakter, 1993; Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989), my research intends to supplement such studies by providing experiential narratives based on the direct engagement with paintings in the art gallery and the impact this has on mental health and well-being.

Ethics

My research does not involve vulnerable individuals but every epistemology ‘implies an ethical-moral stance toward the world and the self of the researcher’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 183). Therefore, as a moral and ethical human being I would instinctively endeavour to carry out research in the most principled way possible. As the structure and focus of my research developed in the nascent stages so did my ethical considerations.

The original intention for this research was to work with participants who had been clinically diagnosed with low-level depressive and anxiety disorders, as well as those with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). It was hoped to assess the

therapeutic benefits of the art gallery and engaging with paintings, whilst also developing the potential of the art gallery as a resource for people with these conditions. Whilst I would have endeavoured to provide a framework for carrying out the research in the most sensitive and ethical way possible, including collaborating with organisations and professionals in this arena, it was decided my own lack of experience and knowledge could be problematic. It was also determined from my early research that a more general study about mental health, emotion and well-being in the cultural sector needed to be carried out before embarking on more focussed research.

Despite the change in research focus I still wanted to maintain an ethical stance with those participants who were involved. Participants were made aware from the outset that their involvement was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. This was carried out through the established process of 'informed consent', where 'subjects must agree voluntarily to participate – that is, without physical or psychological coercion' (Christians in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 144).²² The participants were also informed that I would be complying with the Data Protection Act (1998), with all information they supplied being used anonymously in the resulting thesis. The names used in the final thesis are not the real names of the respondents/participants and have been created for the purpose of anonymity. There was transparency as to how I would be using the data, both that collected online and in person. For further ethical corroboration I would adhere to the BERA (British Educational Research Association) *Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (2004), honouring the ethical principles of respecting the person, knowledge, democratic values, the quality of educational research and academic freedom. I would also maintain a responsibility to participants and the community of educational researchers as stipulated in the BERA guidelines (2004). For the online research study ethical issues were addressed through integral anonymity, with the option for the respondent to supply their name and contact details if they wished to be contacted further about the research. This practice was informed by specific guidelines devised for online

²² Informed consent is adopted in the advised flexible capacity where the practice 'should serve as a guideline prior to fieldwork', rather than make enforcements that are detrimental to the research process (Christians in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 144).

research (ESOMAR, 2011; MRS, 2012).

Credibility and Significance of the Research Study

Within the field of Social Science research is an integral concern of the reliability and validity of any study. However, within the Constructivist approach, and under the auspices of the elusive 'messy method', the salient concepts of 'credibility' and 'plausibility' are generally more appropriate (Hammersley in Piper and Stronach, 2004). In this research I subscribe to Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln's (2004) concept of research as a 'crystalline' form that goes beyond the reliability and validity of triangulation through accounting for the multi-faceted nature of research and what is being researched:

Viewed as crystalline form, as a montage, or as a creative performance around a central theme, triangulation as a form of, or alternative to, validity thus can be extended. Triangulation is the display of multiple, refracted realities simultaneously. Each of the metaphors "works" to create simultaneity rather than the sequential or linear. Readers and audiences are then invited to explore competing visions of the context, to become immersed in and merge with new realities to comprehend.

(Denzin and Lincoln, 2004: 6)

The credibility and plausibility of this research study will be evident if this thesis manages to develop comprehension of the engaged experience of visiting art galleries, whilst providing a critique of this practice in terms of the impact on mental health and well-being. These demonstrations of the significance of the research are discretionary to the integration of the thesis within the wider field of associated scholarship and literature. The significance of the research is to provide an unprecedented investigation into the connection between the cultural sector and concerns of affectivity, emotion, mental health and well-being. Whilst providing an informative investigation, it is also hoped that the research will provide a springboard for developing subsequent theory, research and practice in this field. Through adopting the role of the 'researcher-as-bricoleur-theorist'

(Denzin and Lincoln, 2004: 6) I will be assimilating expansive, interdisciplinary, intangible and fluid concepts to produce a 'reflexive collage or montage' of the experiential phenomenon of the art gallery visitor.

The researcher-as-bricoleur-theorist works between and within competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms... The product of the bricoleur's labour is a complex, quiltlike bricolage, a reflexive collage or montage – a set of fluid, interconnected images and representations. This interpretive structure is like a quilt, a performance text, a sequence of representations connecting the parts of the whole.

(Denzin and Lincoln, 2004: 6)

CHAPTER 4: THE ONLINE SURVEY

THE PILOT ONLINE SURVEY

Introduction

For the purpose of grounding the research I carried out a survey through the use of an online questionnaire to explore the experience of engaging with paintings and art galleries (Appendix 5, p. 336). This was also used to directly determine whether people are affected by paintings and establish themes for engagement. The questionnaire was distributed via the Internet (emails) and social media sites (Facebook and Twitter). The intention was that this would be an organic and generative process, receiving a wide range of responses through the form of 'word-of-mouth' social marketing. As this research is based on the experience of engaging with paintings and not who is engaging with the paintings it was decided that socio-economic and educational background was not an essential criteria for the research. The questionnaire for the survey was completed anonymously by the respondents, although they were given the opportunity to leave their name and contact details if they were interested in being involved further.

Respondents were asked about their experience of art galleries and paintings to give an indication of their own perception of their experience and knowledge to provide an informative foundation for the research study. From the outset of this research study it was also assumed that participants would be those who have some prior knowledge and experience of paintings and art galleries. This was the target group for the research for the exploration of experiential encounters and the responses demonstrated that the responding group fitted into this target group.

The Questions

My research is not purporting to develop engagement with new or diverse audiences but rather to better understand the experience of those who engage with paintings and are affected by this experience. Therefore, the socio-economic, professional and ethnic questions asked in many research projects were not

included in this study. It was determined that a general understanding of the respondents perceived experience of paintings and art galleries would suffice and hence the questions were based on this premise. Whilst it could be argued that it might be useful to collect such background data to determine any connections between personal circumstance and the way people engage with art galleries and paintings, I believe this to be a whole other in-depth and complicated area for study that I would not be able to do justice to in this thesis. Within the parameters of this study – with people who already engage with paintings, art and galleries – I believe that the over-arching themes that become evident in the data are as extractable and identifiable as if I was also asking about socio-economic background. Beyond this, personal information seemed redundant for the purposes of my research – it would not change the nature of the people participating in the research, the engagement they have, my thesis or concepts. The key question other than the acquisition of painting and gallery experience was the open-ended question asking the respondent to describe an encounter they have had with a painting. This was the potent question that would provide an insight into experiential encounters with paintings from which aspects such as affectivity and emotion could be further explored.

The Pilot Study and Analysis

For the purpose of gauging the effectivity and comprehensibility of the online survey, I trialled the questionnaire with MA and PhD students in the fields of Museology and art education who all had at least some knowledge of research methods. It was thought that through employing this group as respondents they would be able to provide informed knowledge and constructive criticism from their own academic, professional and personal experience of the cultural sector and research.

The pilot questionnaire was called ‘Looking at Paintings’ and was created using an online survey tool. The questionnaire consisted of 7 questions – 2 of which were related to the use of the data and future contact so are not being directly accounted for in this thesis. The 5 integral questions and answer options were dedicated to

gaining understanding of each respondent's experience of paintings and art galleries. The questions were all closed with multiple choice answers, except Question 5, which was the pivotal question and open-ended to give the respondent a chance to provide their own account.

Nineteen people responded to this survey and from the data collected I created a 'Respondent Profile' for each individual. I also collectively correlated the data for each answer to produce tables of the responses for presenting an accessible overview of the answers. These tables provided some enlightened insight into the perceived experience and knowledge of the respondents. I will now go through the tables to ascertain some early findings determined from the pilot study.

Question 1.

How would you describe your knowledge of Art Galleries?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Novice	0	0%
Amateur	6	31.6%
Enthusiast	7	36.8%
Expert	6	31.6%

Question 2.

How would you describe your knowledge of paintings?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Novice	1	5.3%
Amateur	3	15.8%
Enthusiast	10	52.6%
Expert	5	26.3%

Question 3.

What type of visitor are you? (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2005)

Please note that you can choose more than one option

Overall respondents who chose each one of the four categories.

	Number of Respondents	Percentage (of all 19 respondents)
Social	13	68.4%
Intellectual	16	84.2%
Emotional	13	68.4%
Spiritual	6	31.6%

Collective responses made by each respondent.

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Social	1	5.3%
Intellectual	0	0%
Emotional	1	5.3%
Spiritual	1	5.3%
Social, Intellectual	3	15.8%
Social, Intellectual, Emotional	5	26.2%
Intellectual, Emotional	3	15.8%
Intellectual, Spiritual	1	5.3%
Social, Intellectual, Emotional Spiritual	4	21%

Question 4.**How often do you go to art galleries (approximately)?**

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Once a week or more	4	21%
Once or twice a month	12	63.2%
3 – 4 times a year	3	15.8%
Less than 3 times a year	0	0%
Never	0	0%

Analysis of Questions 1 – 4

From the analysis of the data collected from the pilot online survey it is possible to make some assertions. Firstly, the majority of respondents classified themselves as ‘enthusiasts’ for both their knowledge of art galleries (36.8%) and of paintings (52.6%). The ‘amateur’ and ‘expert’ categories were the next most prolific, whilst not one participant classified her/himself as a novice. Despite this dispersion of classified ‘knowledge’, the majority of respondents were reasonably regular visitors to art galleries, most attending ‘once or twice a month’ (63.2%). The majority of respondents perceived themselves to be an ‘intellectual’ type of visitor when the responses were analysed based on the four separately defined categories (84.2%). However, when the data for this question was broken into the collective responses of categories made by each respondent the majority ‘type of visitor’ was ‘social, intellectual and emotional’ (26.3%). This provides an interesting insight that respondents to the survey see themselves as multi-faceted visitor types, with the emotional being more evident in collaboration with other types (Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson, 1990).

Question 5.

Describe in up to 100 words an encounter you have had with a painting.

This question gave respondents the opportunity to describe an encounter with a painting. The wording chosen for this question was intentionally general and open so as not to lead the respondents or make suggestive descriptions of what kind of encounter this should be. It was hoped that this would provide an opportunity to gather a wide array of answers and from that extract themes of experience and affectivity.

Here is an example of a response to the question that indicated an 'affective' encounter:



Figure 3

Red on Maroon, Section 4 1959

1959

Mark Rothko

Tate Collection, London

Not so much a painting, but paintings, Rothko's work at the retrospective at Tate Modern in 2008-2009, I was quite overwhelmed in quite a physical way, and had to sit down for a long time, and became quite anxious about having to share the experience with other people.²³

²³ The accompanying illustration is an example of one of the Rothko paintings from the Seagram Murals displayed at the Tate Modern 'Rothko' exhibition, 26 September 2008 – 1 February 2009. Full details of this illustration can be found in Appendix 1, Figure 3, p.310.

Analysis of Question 5

As this question was the integral information that my research was based on I dedicated a lot of time and focus to analysing the data. First of all I created a profile for each individual respondent, with the response to Question 5 and a corresponding image (if possible) as the focus, followed by a table documenting the responses to each of the other questions and any additional comments included in the completed questionnaire. From this I could assess the data individually in an in-depth manner and then correlate all the data to assess it collectively.

I read through the respondent data from Question 5 multiple times to extract expressive vocabulary (that I highlighted in the associated document) related to the experience of engaging with paintings to create a list of linguistic codes of experience and affectivity. The codes from the pilot online survey were replicated from the exact language used by participants, or occasionally translated from a more convoluted statement.

The list of expressive vocabulary was as follows (in alphabetical order):

Abhorrent	Awe
Anxious	Beautiful
Connection	Dramatic
Dreamlike	Emotional
Enduring	Enquiring
Fabulous	Fascination
Gripped	Happy
Hopeful	Humorous
Imagination	Introspective
'Out of this world'	Inspired
Intriguing	Overwhelming
Powerful	Puzzled
Satisfaction	Scared
Stillness	Surprising
Thunderous	Vibrant
Visceral	Wonderful

As it is hard to determine the greatest depth of meaning through assessing individual words in isolation I then situated these words within the wider context

of the respondents' answers, and collectively across all the answers, to 'cluster' the experiential and affective 'codes' of engaging with paintings into essential themes, as follows (in alphabetical order):

- Acquisition of knowledge (factual, cognitive and experiential)
- Affectivity
- Memory
- Personal connection – empathy/sympathy
- Sense of history
- Stylistic and artistic execution

Feedback

As part of the pilot study I requested feedback from the respondents who left their contact details (10 out of 19) for the purposes of adapting or developing the questionnaire accordingly. Two out of the 10 respondents who left their contact details completed the feedback form. The main point garnered from this feedback was the suggestion that I might require more detail about how respondents had acquired their experience and knowledge of art galleries and paintings through enquiring about their academic and professional status. However, as explained earlier, I believe this data to be supplementary to my requirements and not essential to informing the research outcomes. In my opinion it would be more beneficial to have less varied data that can then be explored and analysed in depth, rather than collecting lots of different data that will over-complicate and overwhelm the essential criteria for this research. The other respondent who provided feedback also mentioned that it was difficult to ascertain whether the questionnaire needed to be amended without knowing more about the nature and requirements of the research. Whilst this was a legitimate point, I felt I had provided the relevant information about the focus of the research through a brief explanatory email that accompanied the link to the questionnaire.

Development

Following the pilot study and feedback the changes that were made were as follows:

- Survey title changed from 'Looking at Paintings' to 'Engaging with Paintings' to account for the more expansive, embodied and affective experience that extends beyond visual appreciation. This title is more relevant to the concept of the 'embodied eye' and 'inter/active image'.
- Questions 1 and 2 and their answer options were amended. It was decided that the questions would ask about the 'experience' of art galleries and paintings, rather than 'knowledge', as the research is not focused on factual and intellectual knowledge but on experience. An initial oversight in the original design of the pilot questionnaire.

The second amendment was to the answer options. The choice of 'expert' was replaced by 'knowledgeable' and 'professional'. It was suggested informally as part of the research that people might not feel comfortable asserting themselves as an 'expert', especially as many people perceive that there is often room for self-development, such as further intellectual and experiential acquisition.

The third amendment to questions 1 and 2 was to make it possible to choose more than one answer for the multiple-choice, particularly due to the change in the answer choices.

- A comments box was added to each question to give respondents the opportunity to provide any further feedback.

Summary

The pilot online survey provided the opportunity to investigate the effectivity and usability of this format for gathering data. It also produced emerging codes and

themes that could establish a pliable framework for carrying out the subsequent research. Within the data there were also examples of the possibility of being ‘gripped by an overwhelming emotional reaction’ when engaging with a painting in an art gallery, which indicated that the focus of this research was credible and significant.

THE ONLINE SURVEY

Introduction

Following the pilot and subsequent development of the online survey, I proceeded to circulate the official online survey through the use of social media (Facebook and Twitter) and email, encouraging respondents to further circulate the questionnaire (Appendix 6, p. 338). Through this process I managed to acquire 63 completed questionnaires with a range of responses. I will now present the data and analysis from this survey by methodically focusing on each question. Following this I will consider the data and analysis collectively to provide a coherent and concise insight into the experience of engaging with paintings and art galleries.

The Study and Analysis

Question 1

How would you describe your experience of art galleries?

Please note you can choose multiple answers. Comments are optional.

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Novice	8	12.7%
Amateur	15	23.8%
Enthusiast	10	15.9%
Knowledgeable	10	15.9%
Professional	6	9.5%
Novice/Amateur	1	1.6%
Amateur/Enthusiast	4	6.3%
Enthusiast/Knowledgeable	7	11.1%
Amateur/Enthusiast/Knowledgeable	1	1.6%
Enthusiast/Knowledgeable/Professional	1	1.6%

Question 2**How would you describe your experience of paintings?**

Please note you can choose multiple answers. Comments are optional.

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Novice	5	7.9%
Amateur	17	27%
Enthusiast	13	20.6%
Knowledgeable	10	15.9%
Professional	5	7.9%
Novice, Amateur	1	1.6%
Novice, Enthusiast	1	1.6%
Amateur, Enthusiast	3	4.8%
Enthusiast, Knowledgeable	7	11.1%
Enthusiast, Knowledgeable, Professional	1	1.6%

Question 3.**What kind of visitor are you?**

Please note you can choose multiple answers. Comments are optional.

(Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2005)

Overall respondents who chose each one of the four categories.

	Number of Respondents	Percentage (of all 63 respondents)
Social	37	58.7%
Intellectual	35	55.6%
Emotional	49	77.8%
Spiritual	14	22.2%

Collective responses made by each respondent.

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Social	7	11.1%
Intellectual	4	6.3%
Emotional	9	14.3%
Spiritual	0	0%
Social, Emotional	9	14.3%
Social, Intellectual	3	4.8%
Social, Intellectual, Emotional	10	15.9%
Social, Emotional, Spiritual	1	1.6%
Intellectual, Emotional	7	11.1%
Intellectual, Emotional, Spiritual	4	6.3%
Emotional, Spiritual	2	3.2%
Social, Intellectual, Emotional, Spiritual	7	11.1%

Question 4.**How often do you go to art galleries (approximately)?**

Comments are optional.

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Once a week or more	6	9.5%
Once or twice a month	15	23.8%
3-4 times a year	24	38.1%
Less than 3 times a year	17	27%
Never	1	1.6%

Analysis of Questions 1 – 4

As the first four questions in the official online survey were multiple choice there was a much wider range of different responses than in the pilot study. The majority of respondents classified themselves as ‘amateur’ for both their experience of art galleries (23.8%) and of paintings (27%). Of the main singular category responses the minority of respondents classified themselves as having ‘professional’ experience of art galleries (9.5%), followed by a ‘novice’ experience (12.7%); whilst ‘novice’ and ‘professional’ experience of paintings were in joint minority (7.9%). Although this is based on the self-perception of the individual, this presents an inference that the respondents had some basic experience of art galleries and paintings, whilst often being ‘enthusiastic’. In contrast to the pilot online survey, the respondents of the official study visited art galleries less frequently, with the majority visiting ‘3-4 times a year’ (38.1%).

The significant outcome from this larger sample size was that the majority of respondents perceived that they were an ‘emotional’ type of visitor (77.8%) when the four categories were analysed individually. However, when analysing the collective multiple responses it was the ‘social, intellectual and emotional’ type of visitor that again prevailed, as in the pilot study (15.9%). This could demonstrate that emotional engagement is an integral and inherent facet of a wider contextualised and holistic experience that contributes to an overall sense of positive mental health and well-being, which often includes the social and intellectual.

Question 5.

Describe in up to 100 words an encounter you have had with a painting.

As with the pilot study for the online survey, this question gave respondents the opportunity to describe a personal encounter they had with a painting through experiential narrative. The wording for the question in the official study was replicated directly from the pilot study as it was decided from the small sample size that it garnered the desired type of responses. In retrospect, as will be discussed in more depth in a subsequent section, the only alteration that might

have assisted in answering the question would have been to ask respondents to describe their 'most memorable encounter'.

I have selected a number of examples of responses to the question, with accompanying illustrations of the paintings mentioned, to demonstrate the type of responses collected. I feel this selection provides a credible example of the variety of responses. Please note that any spelling or grammatical errors in the responses have been amended but none of the content has been altered in any other way. The respondents are numbered in order of completion of the online survey and each number is out of the total of 63 respondents.

A Narrative on the *Mona Lisa* and the Celebritisation of Painting



Figure 4

Mona Lisa: Portrait of Lisa Gherardini, wife of Francesco del Giocondo,
c. 1503 – 1506
Leonardo da Vinci
Musée du Louvre, Paris

Perhaps an obvious one but seeing the Mona Lisa at the Louvre was an amazing experience, almost like seeing a pop star or celebrity in the flesh. It did seem to have an aura surrounding it, although I was surprised at how small it was in real life (as one often finds when seeing someone famous in person!).

Respondent 3

I had always been looking forward to seeing the Mona Lisa, so when I had a few hours to spare, I jumped in a taxi and headed to the Louvre, only to discover that it was closed on Tuesdays. The next day I headed over again, when it was opened. After all the years of reading, hearing about, and seeing photos of the Mona Lisa, I was expecting more. I was a little disappointed at how small and dark it was.

Respondent 6

I have seen the "Mona Lisa" twice, and my experience has been disappointing on both occasions. I am not certain whether this was because of the "hype" surrounding the picture resulting in an expectation greater than that which I received upon viewing it, or more simply that the picture itself simply failed to inspire me. I suspect the latter as being the principal reason. Also the large number of people all trying to see the picture on both occasions did not help, although with respect to other paintings, this has been less of an issue when my reaction has been more positive to the individual painting.

Respondent 7

Mona Lisa – at the Louvre. Massively underwhelmed. Behind glass and crowded with tourists. There was no room to enjoy the painting or any emotional response the painting might have had because you were fighting for room to see. Awful.

Respondent 13

On my first trip to Paris with my then girlfriend (now wife) we went to the Louvre. One painting on the "must see" list was the Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci. The area surrounding the painting was swamped with tourists and perhaps this distracted me from enjoying the painting but I didn't quite understand what all the fuss was about – was she smiling? I thought she was but aside from that I just didn't quite get it. This encounter was memorable for me as the painting failed to engage with me – I expected to be wowed but I wasn't. Unlike when you walk into the Sistine Chapel, which takes your breath away with inspiration.

Respondent 41

The *Mona Lisa* (Figure 4, p. 149)²⁴ was the artwork mentioned the most by respondents to the online survey, a total of five times. The painting that was the next most mentioned was *Irises* by Van Gogh (1889), which was mentioned twice. The responses to the *Mona Lisa* demonstrate an array of engaged experiences, and how people encounter paintings differently. Of the five people who responded with this painting four of them had a 'negative', or 'destabilised', experience and only one perceived their experience in a 'positive', or 'affirmative', way. Each of the

²⁴ Full details of this illustration can be found in Appendix 1, p. 310.

responses appear to be based on the 'celebritisation' of the painting and the expectation of the respondent due to this celebritisation (Appendix 7, Auto-ethnography, pp. 340-343). For 'Respondent 3' it was an 'amazing experience, almost like seeing a pop star or celebrity in the flesh'. The respondent talks of the 'aura surrounding the painting' suggesting it provided an affective experience for the individual engaging with the painting, aligned with the 'aura' as defined by Benjamin (1935) and Elkins (2001). This addresses two affective criteria of the aura and celebritisation, as well as paintings providing both positive and negative affectively and emotively engaged experiences.

This same respondent account (Respondent 3) goes on to address the physical parameters of the painting. It becomes evident that some people have an affective or emotionally engaged experience from large paintings, whilst others have the same experience for small paintings, based on embodiment and 'taste accountability' (i.e. accounting for the subjective construct of taste and its role in visitor choices). In this instance, referring to the painting, the respondent stated that they were 'surprised at how small it was in real life'. This statement gives no indication of whether the altercation between expectation and reality of the physical size of the object had an affirmative or destabilised affect. However, it does determine that when one has a cerebral or visual relationship with a surrogate image before seeing the original work in its physicality, this can impact on the expectations and outcome of an encounter. It also suggests how celebritisation, of a painting or a person, can psychologically construct physical parameters and attributes that are not related to the original, physical actuality.

The expectations of this particularly renowned painting have had a detrimental impact on the encounter for many visitors to see the Mona Lisa. Respondent 6 was 'a little disappointed at how small and dark it was'. Respondent 7 coherently summarises why people seem to be underwhelmed by this particular painting, which is also perhaps applicable to other famous and celebritised paintings – the pre-viewing 'hype' creating disproportionate expectations that negatively impact first engagement with the actual painting and the imposition of crowds of people.

The responses to this particular painting are significant because they run contrary to the majority of the other responses, which are based on positive, affirmative encounters. Whilst other people mention being 'overwhelmed' or powerfully affected in an indescribable way no other responses mention the disappointment of seeing a particular painting. This introduces a potential investigation into why people find paintings disappointing as much as why they engage affirmatively with them. In the instance of the *Mona Lisa*, instead of being overwhelmed, Respondent 13 was 'massively underwhelmed'; whilst Respondent 41 found that the encounter with the *Mona Lisa* 'was memorable for me as the painting failed to engage with me'. Through this we are able to see the demonstration of how memorable events within our life narratives can be formed from both the positive and the negative.

The prolific dissemination of visual surrogates and constructions of celebritisation in the visual world can lead to de-sensitisation or magnetisation. De-sensitisation occurs when a painting has been overly disseminated or over-hyped leading to the lack of affective impact when the individual engages with the original painting. This is comparable to a 'loss of aura' (Benjamin, 1935) from over-exposure. Magnetisation is the dualistic opposite by creating an attracting force through prior knowledge or experience of a visual surrogate before experiencing the original painting, related to the aesthetic component of 'magnetism' as defined by Armstrong (2001: 3).

A Narrative of a Distinctively Emotionally Engaged and Affective Encounter



Figure 5
Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose
1885 – 86
John Singer Sargent
Tate Britain, London

A Singer Sargent painting of two children in the Tate, 'Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose'. I felt riveted, like I knew the children in it, like I was one of them. The light in their lanterns was magical, captivating, and it really took me to a place where I was calm and peaceful. I stared at it for a long time, and went back to the Tate at a later date specifically to show someone else it because it moved me so much, although I couldn't recapture that first adoration and surprise.

Respondent 14

This Sargent painting (Figure 5, p. 153)²⁵ was only mentioned by one respondent, yet it demonstrates a wholly affective encounter and emotionally engaged

²⁵ Full details of this illustration can be found in Appendix 1, p. 311.

experience, as well as directly describing how a painting can have a positive impact on well-being through being evocatively 'calm and peaceful'. The technical execution of the painting as conceived by the artist has been translated into an intangible yet emotive encounter. Looking at the image of the children, Respondent 14 discovered that '[t]he light in their lanterns was magical, captivating, and it really took me to a place where I was calm and peaceful'. Seemingly originally an individual affective encounter, the experience 'moved' the respondent so much that they wanted to share it with someone else. This presents an incidence of 'scaffolding' through endeavouring to encourage and support an emotionally engaged experience for another person. Although my research has been based on the individual, unaccompanied encounter, this provides an insight into how individual experience can also be transmitted through social interactivity to cultivate and develop the emotionally engaged experience and affective encounters with paintings of others. Although the individual encounter is important in its own right this provides a direct example of how the individual experience can inform and bolster the current work of cultural organisations aimed at cultivating positive mental health and emotional well-being. The respondent was unable to 'recapture that first adoration and surprise' but the memory of the encounter has stayed with them as a positive element of their life narrative and a recollective encounter that has been passed onto another individual. This becomes a representation for the organically developed nexus of experience.

A Narrative on Artistic and Stylistic Execution



Figure 6
Surprised!
1891
Henri Rousseau
National Gallery, London

One particular painting I have always remembered is Tiger in a Tropical Storm, by Henri Rousseau. I think I was about 10 when I first saw it on a school trip to the National Gallery. It's a deceptively childish painting, quite naïve, and I remember loving the colours and shapes, as well as the surprised tiger! A great painting to get a child enthusiastic about art. Images of this painting always make me smile.

Respondent 9

This respondent's experiential narrative demonstrates more explicitly than many of the other accounts how the respondent perceives that the physical execution and stylistic representation creates an affective encounter – reminiscent of 'significant form' (Bell, 1958: 17-18). Respondent 9 describes this painting (Figure

6, p. 155)²⁶ as ‘a deceptively childish painting, quite naïve’. The experiential narrative accounts for how at first glance the artistic execution of the painting could represent that of a child’s painting but on closer inspection it is possible to see the skill used to convey such an impression, as well as the skilful variation of vast tonalities of green. The respondent remembers ‘loving the colours and shapes, as well as the surprised tiger!’ This suggests that the respondent semantically acknowledges that it is the physical properties within the painting in particular that provide an ‘affective encounter’. The respondent also provides another example of potential experiential scaffolding, to ‘get a child enthusiastic about art’. The respondent states that images of this particular painting always make him/her smile – a physiological reaction to an affective encounter akin to Elkins’ use of tears as an empirical indicator (Elkins, 2001) and the theory of Tomkins (1962). This experiential narrative also substantiates the role of the surrogate in eliciting affect through memory of the original when viewing ‘images of this painting’.

²⁶ Full details of this illustration can be found in Appendix 1, p. 311.

A Spiritual Narrative



Figure 7
The Trinity Altarpiece
c. 1478 – 79
Hugo van der Goes
National Galleries Scotland, Edinburgh

The Hugo Van der Goes altarpiece in the National Gallery of Scotland is a spiritual experience for me - it has a great deal of the "other world" in it.

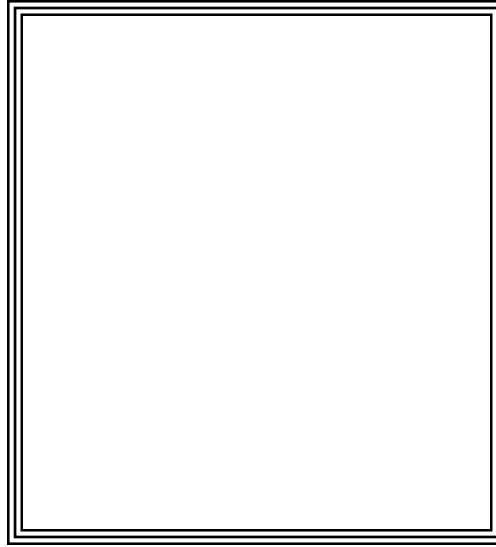
Respondent 34

The experiential narrative of Respondent 34 provides an example of a ‘spiritual’ affective encounter, conceivably a religious one in this instance. Whilst 14 respondents deemed themselves to be spiritual visitors to art galleries this is the only response about an encounter with a painting (Figure 7, p. 157)²⁷ that directly mentions any spiritual impact, or numinosity. Although this is based on religious imagery and could be construed as a religious (Christian) experience, the spiritual encounter can be applied to encounters of different faiths or to the secularly spiritual. This might even be the case in this particular narrative as the respondent doesn’t make any direct allusions to religion or Christianity. The respondent does

²⁷ Full details of this illustration can be found in Appendix 1, p. 311.

directly refer to engagement being a 'spiritual experience', which is based particularly on the image having 'a great deal of the "other world" in it'. The narrative closely associates the spiritual with disembodiment, liminality, escapism, immersion and the contentious field of transcendence – re-asserting that many of the criteria for an affective encounter and emotionally engaged experience are intrinsically entwined, and difficult to untangle, define or assess in isolation.

The Dislocated Narrative



This one is a toughy – it might throw people off from completing the rest of the questionnaire which is otherwise quick and very accessible!... It stumped me and I am surrounded by art at work!

Respondent 2

I am genuinely struggling to remember a specific encounter with a painting. I can think of exhibitions and galleries and then, from there, perhaps I could consider what paintings were displayed. As I don't visit galleries much, it is likely to be something from the most recent exhibition.

Respondent 17

An impossible question; answer depends entirely on the particular painting.

Respondent 46

How on earth could I describe an encounter with a single painting? All the ones I own are special for their own reasons and the few major works I have seen in galleries from Titian to Dali have stopped me in my tracks too.

Respondent 55

The image of an empty frame was used in the data correlation and analysis for the responses that either didn't refer to a specific painting (mentioning either an artist or giving a general response about experience) or to those people who were unable to answer the question with reference to an encounter with a painting or artist. For the purposes of this thematic analysis I am focusing on the respondents who were unable to provide an answer about a particular encounter. This data provided a perceptible example of some of the problematic obstacles that impacted this research process due to the intangible and fluid nature of the entities being researched. In a more general sense, the 'dislocated narrative' demonstrates the difficulty for all researchers in choosing the wording for a question, especially without overly leading the respondent. For the purposes of not leading the respondents I aimed to provide as open and general a question as possible, not using any suggestive or evocative vocabulary. I believe that some people found it a difficult question to answer due to the choice of this wording. The other difficulty lies in getting people to express encounters they have had with paintings, especially due to sensitive, personal and indeterminate nature of these experiences. Expression has been a long-standing problematic area due to the previously perceived elitist practice of engaging with paintings and the subsequent belief that a heightened knowledge about art needs to be acquired to give people confidence and validation in their own responses. Bourdieu's sociological research and 'cultural capital' (1991, 1993, 1979), amongst many other doctrines from the past decades, has left a legacy that to appreciate and enjoy art – and express these experiences – you need to have a particular level of knowledge. This has exacerbated a deeply ingrained doctrine. Another potential area of research is presented through this concern – why are people able to more readily express feelings about other artistic media (books, films, music, theatre, sculpture/interactive artwork), yet paintings remain one of the most difficult media to express linguistically when it comes to describing experience?

Even those who are enthusiastic and knowledgeable about art and paintings found this a difficult question to answer. Respondent 2, who has described her/himself as 'enthusiastic' and 'knowledgeable' about both art galleries and paintings, considered that this was a challenging question. As someone who situates

her/himself as coming from a relatively informed position they thought this question might 'throw people off from completing the rest of the questionnaire which is otherwise quick and very accessible!' The respondent went on to state that they found it a difficult question to answer even though they are 'surrounded by art at work'.

Respondent 17 had similar difficulties in answering this question. Whilst this respondent considered her/himself to have a 'novice' experience of art galleries and 'amateur' experience of paintings, they actually visited art galleries '3-4 times a year' so must have some informed experience. The respondent stated however that they were 'genuinely struggling to remember a specific encounter with a painting'. Although the respondent's experience of paintings was difficult to recall, they did have a more general memory of exhibitions and galleries, which they believed could lead on to a memory of a painting. This was not included in the data provided so it is difficult to say if they would have been able to answer this question having given it more thought. Despite this, the respondent believed that the painting they would likely remember was based on the accessibility of most recent memories and would thus probably 'be something from the most recent exhibition' they had visited, providing an example of the potency of memorability within a temporally constructed retrospective experiential narrative (Falk and Dierking, 1990).

The empty frame also represents those respondents that I believe to have misunderstood the question, or did not regard it as a permissible question due to the different encounters with different paintings all holding their own credence. It was deemed 'an impossible question to answer' by Respondent 46 as it 'depends entirely on the painting'. I had hoped the respondents would share one encounter with one painting, without suggesting that this encounter would necessarily supersede all others. The word 'memorable' was not used in this question as I assumed respondents would instinctively share their most memorable encounter (or at least one of the most memorable encounters if it was not possible to isolate one). In hindsight I realise this addition might have helped guide respondents without directly leading them, though there is no guarantee it would have altered

the responses of those who thought it was an 'impossible question to answer'. Respondent 55 quite clearly states that all the paintings they own are special, whilst all the ones they have experienced in galleries had an affective impact. This suggests that all paintings are perceived as having the same amount of potential affective capital.

Respondent 27 manages to succinctly describe the difficulty of attempting to express an encounter with a painting linguistically, highlighting one of the most evident problematic areas of this entire research. The statement represents the complexity of evaluating the affective impact on emotion, mental health and well-being when engaging with museums, art galleries and other cultural organisations:

What I love about art is difficult to express in words. I've had many moving encounters with paintings over the years, all of which are very difficult to talk about. Seeing a great artwork is like thinking a new thought from outside language, time travel, or a sudden moment of clarification of many things put together. Sometimes a work is simply of itself. I'm sure I change the work, and I know I have to work to see and understand - although I might not be 'right'.

Respondent 27

Outcomes

From this online survey I was able to deduce a number of criteria for the engagement with paintings and art galleries, providing useful data in its own right whilst also consolidating the foundation for more in-depth data collection on-site in an art gallery. These criteria are as follows:

- There are many varied contributing factors to the affective encounter and emotionally engaged experience. These can be tentatively acknowledged in isolation or as an entwined labyrinth of the *totality* of human lived experience and narrative. Whilst an individual may be able to go some way to describing these factors it does not mean that this precludes the existence of other factors, or that it is a direct linguistic replication of the experience as it happened. As I have already determined, it is difficult to

verbalise experience in a static and directly mimetic way. It is difficult to express and replicate linguistically an affective encounter or emotionally engaged experience, substantiating the complexity in researching and promoting aspects of mental health and well-being.

- The contributing factors to an affective and engaged experience come in various and diverse guises, including:

Contributing Factor	Example(s)
Physical properties of a painting	Size, style, artistic execution, content, composition
Intangible properties of a painting	Aura, spirituality, liminality, immersion, calmness
Physical properties of the environment in which the painting is viewed	Architectural space, layout and style
Intangible properties of the environment in which the painting is viewed	Liminality, threshold fear, dis/orientation, comfort, empowerment
Social properties of the environment in which the painting is viewed	Lots of/not many people, too busy/loud
Social properties of the visiting experience, i.e. who you go with	Unaccompanied, with a friend/partner, with family, with an educational/tour group
Purposive properties of visit, i.e. motivations for visiting an art gallery or looking at a painting	Educational, social, recreational, unintentional (e.g. passing by and decide to go into an art gallery)
Personal association: connection, taste and projection of memories	Preferring a particular style of paintings, e.g. Abstract; catalyst for remembering childhood experience

- The celebritisation of paintings, and the abundant dissemination of surrogate images, can be conducive to an affirmative (positive) or destabilised (negative) affective encounter and emotionally engaged experience. The renown of images also has implications for the expectations of visitor engagement when it comes to having an encounter with an original artwork. These elements of experience could alter affectivity and emotion, hence having an impact on mental health and well-being.

- Expectations of visiting an art gallery or engaging with a painting have an impact on experiential outcomes. This is often based on the celebritisation of visual imagery, as mentioned above. Expectations are often most prevailing in a pre-planned visit to an art gallery or other cultural organisation due to the additional time available to construct expectations. Expectations can be formed from aspects such as: marketing, social interaction, self-created perception, hope and assumption; as well as prior knowledge of art, artists and art galleries.
- Through an analysis of the accounts of the experience of engaging with paintings it is possible to determine that visiting art galleries and engaging with paintings could have an impact on mental health and well-being. This is demonstrated in the vocabulary and statements used by participants in this research study. However, a difficulty lies in determining the longevity of this impact, which would need to be addressed in a separate in-depth study over a longer period of time.

Summary

By considering the language used by those who engage with paintings, we are able to develop our understanding of how people perceive their experience through narrative. This information, both the language and the methodology, could subsequently be used to inform visitor research in cultural organisations and assist in devising a tool for the evaluation of such intangible entities as affect, emotion, mental health and well-being, as well as the experience of engaging with paintings in the art gallery more generally.

CHAPTER 5: THE ON-SITE SURVEY

Introduction

As a pivotal methodological mechanism between the online survey and the small-scale ethnographic study at the Guildhall Art Gallery, I carried out a small survey at the gallery through the use of a questionnaire (Appendix 8, p. 344). The purpose of this was to add greater credence to the online survey and provide a general foundation of visitor experience at the Guildhall Art Gallery on which to base the ethnographic research study. As the ethnographic study would be in-depth with a small sample size, the on-site survey would supplement this data with a slightly larger sample size and more concise and general information.

The questionnaire was a combination of the online questionnaire (4 closed questions) and the prompt questions that would be used in the ethnographic research study (4 open questions). As this questionnaire was produced in the transitory stage between the pilot online survey and the official online survey, 'expert' was used in the on-site survey before it was changed to 'knowledgeable' and 'professional' for the official online survey for the Question 1 and Question 2 answer options. Whilst this would have preferably corresponded exactly with the answer options on the official online survey it was useful as a substantiation of the claim that people would not often naturally be disposed to classify themselves as an 'expert' – not one respondent perceived themselves as an 'expert' in this survey.

A member of staff approached people in the gallery and asked them to complete the questionnaire. Through this method 26 completed questionnaires were returned. Some of the respondents did not realise that it was a two-sided questionnaire so the response rates to the two parts of the questionnaire are slightly unbalanced. Out of the 26 respondents 5 respondents didn't answer the first 4 questions, whilst 4 further respondents did not provide a tick-box answer to at least one of the questions so their data was deemed void and not included. Therefore, the data analysis of the 4 closed questions is based on data collected from 17 respondents. Data analysis of the 4 open questions is based on 26 respondents, as all respondents provided answers for all of the questions.

I will now present the data from the questionnaires as they were returned. For the on-site survey, data was analysed collectively due to the response number and the intention to gain an insightful overview of the visitor experience to the Guildhall Art Gallery. This would be supplemented by individualistic and collective analysis as part of the ethnographic research study.

The Survey and Analysis

Closed Questions

Question 1.

How would you describe your experience of art galleries?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Novice	3	17.6%
Amateur	7	41.2%
Enthusiast	6	35.3%
Expert	0	0%
Amateur/Enthusiast	1	5.9%

From analysis of this question it was possible to determine that the majority of the respondents to the survey considered themselves to have ‘amateur’ knowledge of art galleries (41.2%), closely followed by ‘enthusiast’ (35.3%). This provides a mid-range experiential perception and insight of art gallery visiting.

Question 2.

How would you describe your experience of paintings?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Novice	4	23.5%
Amateur	7	41.2%
Enthusiast	5	29.4%
Expert	0	0%
Amateur/Enthusiast	1	5.9%

As with the previous question, the majority of the respondents to the survey considered themselves to have ‘amateur’ experience of paintings. From this it is possible to investigate how those who assert themselves as amateurs engage with

paintings in an art gallery and create a narrative of this experience.

Question 3.

What type of visitor are you? (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2005)

Please note that you can choose more than one option.

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Social	5	29.4%
Intellectual	4	23.5%
Emotional	2	11.8%
Spiritual	0	0%
Social/Intellectual	1	5.9%
Social/Emotional	1	5.9%
Intellectual/Emotional	4	23.5%

From the responses to this question it is possible to ascertain that the majority of respondents regard their art gallery visiting experience as a social one. However, the most significant outcome of the analysis of this question is the number of respondents who considered themselves to be ‘intellectual and emotional’ visitors (23.5%), rectifying the mythical dichotomy of ‘head’ and ‘heart’ and substantiating ‘emotionally-tinged learning’ (Dwyer, 2011: 3). Another significant outcome is that not one respondent perceived that they were ‘spiritual’ visitors.

Question 4.

How often do you go to art galleries (approximately)?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Once a week or more	1	5.9%
Once or twice a month	8	47.1%
3 – 4 times a year	5	29.4%
Less than 3 times a year	3	17.6%
Never	0	0%

This question provides information about approximately how many times respondents to the on-site survey visit art galleries a year. The majority are fairly regular visitors, although the number of visits creates an altercation with the previous answers.

Open Questions

Question 1.

What was the most memorable aspect of your visit? Why?

For the purposes of analysing the data collected from this question I extensively familiarised myself with a collective correlation of the responses to determine themes. I was then able to allocate each phrase to the themes, or mark the themes against each statement – carrying out both these approaches to test the method and to determine that they corresponded. As each phrase could fit into more than one theme I was also able to specify the number of times each theme was apparent across the entirety of the collective data through a form of content analysis.

For presenting this data I will first set out each of the themes with one corresponding response as an example, as well as the number of times each theme emerged from the data through the collective responses. Subsequently I will provide a demonstration of a response with its relevant corresponding themes to explain the two-directional analysis process.

Thematic Device	Example Quote	Theme Apparent (no. of times)
Tangible Environment (built, architectural and physical elements)	<i>The Roman amphitheatre because it's an amazing discovery finding Roman ruins underneath the modern buildings of the City.</i>	8
Intangible Environment (atmosphere, ambience)	<i>Quiet space to view the works.</i>	5
Collections	<i>I was very taken by the array of Victorian paintings in the Gallery.</i>	9
Curatorship and Interpretation	<i>I believe it's well presented</i>	1
Artistic Execution and Skill	<i>I really liked the paintings which looked very real.</i>	2
Impact of Scale	<i>Size of the paintings.</i>	2
Personal connection (interest or association)	<i>Seeing grand paintings – to know the events occurred in history in the places you've been and the detail.</i>	1
Professional interest	<i>As a City of London Guide, I find the gallery a real gem that shines within the city.</i>	1
Sense of History	<i>The ruins downstairs, because it's so much history.</i>	8
Geographical/cultural identity and contextualisation	<i>Lovely old paintings of London and the Roman amphitheatre.</i>	2

Revelation, Novelty, Discovery	<i>Surprise of finding this gallery.</i>	4
Social Interaction	<i>Very attractive girl who handed me this survey.</i>	1
Temporary Exhibition ('John Bartlett: London Sublime')	<i>John Bartlett exhibition. Large scale and trompe l'oeil!</i>	2

Analysis Example

I will now demonstrate how one response is able to fit into more than one of the determined themes:

The Roman amphitheatre because it's an amazing discovery finding Roman ruins underneath the modern buildings of the City.

This statement represents the following themes:

- Built environment
- Sense of history
- Revelation/Novelty/Discovery

Through analysis of this data it has been determined that with this sample the 'collections' (mentioned 9 times) are the most memorable aspect of the visit to the Guildhall Art Gallery, closely followed by the 'built/architectural environment' (8 times) and the 'sense of history' (8 times). The least mentioned aspects are 'curatorship', 'personal connection', 'professional interest', and 'social interaction' – represented thematically only once each. Due to the limitations of the data gathered from this survey, it was not possible to conclude that the lack of representation of these themes indicated an absence from the actual visitor experience, or determine reasons for why these themes were not represented more. However, I could make a strong supposition that the 'collections' had the overriding impact, as one might have assumed and hoped in the case of the art gallery visit.

Question 2.

What was the most memorable painting you saw today? Why?

For the purposes of analysing this data I will present a list of the paintings mentioned with the corresponding responses (with reproduction images of the paintings located in Appendix 1 (pp. 309-323) for reference). I will then determine the themes that arose from a thorough semantical assessment of the collective responses.

Painting	Experiential Narratives: Quotes	Illustration
<i>Israel in Egypt (1867), Edward John Poynter</i>	<i>Sheer scale and detail; I loved the accurate attention to the details.</i>	Figure 8, p. 312
<i>Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee Service, 22 June 1897 (1897 – 1899), Andrew Carrick Gow</i>	<i>Timely. [The research was carried out during the year of Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee.]; The most memorable painting was the 'Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee Service' by Andrew Carrick Gow because it is painted with so many details.</i>	Figure 9, p. 312
<i>The Trial of Sir William Wallace at Westminster (Date unknown), William Bell Scott</i>	<i>I liked seeing William Wallace getting his deserts; [One other mention with no details.]</i>	Figure 10, p. 312
<i>Herod's Birthday Feast (1868), Edward Armitage</i>	<i>Salome's dance – very expressive faces.</i>	Figure 11, p. 312
<i>La Ghirlandata (1873), Dante Gabriel Rossetti</i>	<i>La Ghirlandata because I love Rossetti's style; [One other mention with no details.]</i>	Figure 12, p. 313
<i>The Eve of St. Agnes (1848), William Holman Hunt</i>	<i>The Eve of St. Agnes by William Holman Hunt, because of its renown and especially owing to the popularity of the Pre-Raphaelites at the moment with the current exhibition at the Tate Britain; Eve of St Agnes. Interest in Keats and the Romantic poets.</i>	Figure 13, p. 313

<i>George Dance's Design for the New London Bridge, London (1802), William Daniell</i>	[One mention with no details.]	Figure 14, p. 313
<i>The Ninth of November, 1888 (1890), William Logsdail</i>	<i>Ninth of November - there was a knowledgeable gentleman giving a commentary; Lord Mayor of London's Procession. It looks almost photographic and captures so much activity.</i>	Figure 15, p. 314
<i>The Demolition of London Bridge (Date unknown), J.W.S.</i>	<i>London Bridge being dismantled and taken away. The subject is of interest to me.</i>	Figure 16, p. 314
<i>The Last Evening (1873), James Tissot</i>	<i>Complete ambiguity.</i>	Figure 17, p. 314
<i>Defeat of the Floating Batteries at Gibraltar, September 1782 (The Siege of Gibraltar) (1783 – 1791), John Singleton Copley</i>	[One mention with no details.]	Figure 18, p. 314
<i>The Music Lesson (1877), Frederic Leighton</i>	<i>Tough call! I really like 'The Music Lesson' - Lord Leighton. The background of the child being instructed (Connie Gilchrist) is fun.</i>	Figure 19, p. 315
<i>Ego et Rex Meus (1888), Sir John Gilbert</i>	<i>Ego et Rex by Sir John Gilbert. I am reading "Wolf Hall" and I am fascinated by this period of British History.</i>	Figure 20, p. 315
<i>Lancelot du Lac (1886), Sir John Gilbert</i>	<i>Lancelot du Lac – history and battle scenes.</i>	Figure 21, p. 315
<i>The Thames by Moonlight with Southwark Bridge, London (1884), John Atkinson Grimshaw</i>	<i>One with the moon overlooking the Thames - the detail in the sky was beautiful.</i>	Figure 22, p. 316

As well as this list of paintings 2 respondents in the survey mentioned an artist, John Gilbert, but with no reference to a specific painting. This made John Gilbert the most mentioned artist in the survey, being mentioned four times in total. The reason one of the respondents gave for this choice was as follows:

The Sir John Gilbert pictures - Why? Their depiction of literature and the politics of the day, not to mention the history.

Also, 3 people mentioned the temporary exhibition ['John Bartlett: London Sublime'] that was on at the Guildhall Art Gallery at the time this survey was carried out. As this temporary exhibition was not going to be included in my research generally, particularly in the ethnographic study, I have not included this data any further in the analysis process.

Due to the nature of the responses and the number of respondents who did not give any indication to why a particular painting was the most memorable for them (4 respondents) it is a challenging process to determine themes from this question. It is also difficult to determine whether the respondents were unable to determine for themselves why these paintings were memorable, or perhaps unable to express the reason. However, I have tried to use the available yet limited information to extract relevant themes.

- **Social Interaction and Interpretation**

Whilst these are two separate and distinct themes, that could also be interrelated, I have combined them here as they represent a respondent's comment on one painting being the most memorable due to the 'knowledgeable gentleman giving a commentary'. The visitor was therefore being provided with both a social encounter and interpretation of the collections. The combination of these two elements made for a memorable encounter engaging with a painting. It is unknown if the interpretive talk for this painting was in isolation or part of a tour, which makes it hard to determine if the painting is memorable because of the interpretation or because the respondent enjoyed this painting most out of a number of paintings that were interpreted.

- **Artistic/stylistic execution:**

This includes the scale of the painting and the mention of the detail of various paintings [4 specific mentions]. One respondent also talks about the

‘photographic’ impression of a painting (*The Ninth of November, 1888*; Figure 15, Appendix 1, p. 314) and how it ‘captures so much activity’ within the canvas. The latter of these observations implies a dynamism and sense of life that the artist has managed to inject into the painting.

- **Humanistic empathy**

One of the most demonstrative examples of this in the data collected from the survey at the Guildhall Art Gallery is the mention of the ‘expressive faces’ in a painting. This represents how the viewer makes a human connection when engaging with a painting through their own embodied and emotive empathetic experience of emotions and facial expressions – as seen previously in this thesis in the research on eye-tracking and ‘fixations’ (Binnie, 2010; DiPaola, Riebe and Enns, 2010; Neault, 2013; Quiroga and Pedreira, 2010; Yarbus, 1967). The ‘act of empathy, *Einfühlung*’, is one of the foremost routes to affectivity (Bourdieu, 1979; Elkins, 2001).

- **Personal connection (interest or association)**

The theme of ‘personal connection’ can relate to a various array of subjects. This includes subjective taste accountability, such as the interest in a particular subject matter or style. It also includes the personal associations visitors make with paintings based on their own thoughts, opinions, knowledge or experience. In the data collected for this survey the emphasis was on the connections made through ‘taste’. Two respondents commented on the literary connection within some of the paintings associated with their own enjoyment of particular texts. Other respondents proclaimed an interest in history or bridges, which was the reason for a particular painting being the most memorable for them.

There was one atypical demonstration of personal connection in the data collected in this survey that is also combined with a ‘sense of history’. I have termed this theme ‘sense of historic patriotism’ for the purposes of this incident. This rare experiential theme was demonstrated through one respondent’s response to *The Trial of Sir William Wallace at Westminster*

(Date unknown) by William Bell Scott (Figure 10, Appendix 1, p. 312). The respondent found this painting memorable because they 'liked seeing William Wallace getting his deserts'. Without having gathered more information from this respondent it is difficult to determine their reasons for this or the level of seriousness of their comment.

- **Contemporary socio-cultural association for viewer:**

Two respondents made specific reference to events that were taking place at the time the survey was being carried out, which directly influenced their experience of engaging with a painting. One of these references was to an historic event from the past that was happening again close to the time the survey was carried out. *Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee Service, 22 June 1897 (1897-1899)* by Andrew Carrick Gow (Figure 9, Appendix 1, p. 312) was considered to be 'timely' as 2012 also saw Queen Elizabeth II celebrate her Diamond Jubilee. The viewer was able to make a connection between historical and contemporary events through engaging with a painting – bringing history to life whilst also giving gravitas to the experience and painting through the legacy of significant royal events

The second temporal connection was through the popularisation and heightened engagement with Pre-Raphaelite paintings due to the 'blockbuster' exhibition at Tate Britain in 2012.²⁸ This theme of contemporary socio-cultural association also reflects the celebritisation of paintings and artists, as well as the role of the surrogate through various contemporary media, such as exhibitions, social media, marketing and journalism.

- **Intrigue**

This theme represents an engaged encounter where the visitor's inquisitive nature is inspired by a particular element, or elements, of the visit or a painting. In this instance a respondent found a painting, *The Last Evening* (1873) by James Tissot, (Figure 17, Appendix 1, p. 314) to be memorable

²⁸ 'Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Avant Garde' ran at Tate Britain from 12th September 2012 to 13th January 2013.

due to its 'complete ambiguity'. This represents the role of implementing the viewer's imagination to engage with a painting through interpretive dialogue (Schopenhauer in Hofstadter, 1976; Zeki, 1999).

- **Enjoyment**

This theme is strongly entwined with 'personal connection'. It is the thematic outcome where the visitor had an enjoyable time, or enjoyed the engagement with an art gallery or painting. This could be based on a wide and diverse range of factors where the visitor's mental 'state of mind' is positively elevated through an affective encounter. In this instance it was the composition and stylistic execution of *The Music Lesson* (1877) (Figure 19, Appendix 1, p. 315) by Frederic Leighton that was deemed as a 'fun' embodiment of visual frivolity.

- **Naturalistic phenomena**

This is where the 'artistic and stylistic execution' of an artwork captures the phenomena of nature and is also associated with the sublime. In this survey the thematic rendition of 'naturalistic phenomena' was captured by John Atkinson Grimshaw in *The Thames by Moonlight with Southwark Bridge, London* (1884) (Figure 22, Appendix 1, p. 316). The visitor found this painting particularly memorable because 'the detail in the sky was beautiful'.

Although I am presenting each theme as an autonomous, encapsulated entity they are in fact often entwined or interrelated in the visitor experience and narrative dream space – like all themes that emerge from this research and data analysis.

Question 3.

How did your visit compare to other visits you have made to art galleries?

As with the other open-ended questions, I thoroughly familiarised myself with the narratives provided by each respondent in response to this question. Subsequently

I carried out the same coding process to create a list of themes and vocabulary. As I have demonstrated my approach to analysing the data for Question 1 of the open questions I will proceed by providing an account of the themes that emerged from the narratives from the list presented previously. These are represented here in response to this question in a more coherent analytical narrative:

- **Tangible and Intangible Environment**

The tangible (physical, built and architectural space) and intangible (e.g. atmosphere, ambience) were mentioned the most in response to this question [Theme apparent: 17 times]. The feel of the space – that was considered to be ‘beautifully laid out and very accessible’ – provided an affirmative experience for these respondents. The quietness and lack of crowds produced an atmosphere that was an effective environment in which to ‘enjoy the paintings and reflect on the visit’. Respondents who commented on the environment of the art gallery also mentioned how friendly it was, and ‘more intimate and less intimidating than other larger London Art Galleries’. The Guildhall Art Gallery was considered to be a traditional art gallery, perceived as a favourable attribute. The ‘grace and beauty’ of the ‘grand and historical building/place’ – with the additional uniqueness of the Roman amphitheatre remains – provided a quiet, uncrowded and reflective atmosphere. This emerged as an accolade to visiting the gallery that became conducive to an affective and affirmative experience.

- **Collections**

Respondents inevitably mentioned the collections displayed at the Guildhall Art Gallery, sometimes in comparison to other art galleries [Theme apparent: 8 times]. Respondents considered that the gallery ‘contains some excellent works’, with particular emphasis on the presence of historical and Victorian paintings. One respondent epitomised the therapeutic benefits of visiting an art gallery as they affirmed that the ‘collection gives me a sense of peace’. Other respondents mentioned how there was a manageable amount to see (also related to the ‘tangible environment’ and ‘impact of

scale' through the size of the art gallery), which was conducive to an enjoyable visit and experience. Whilst there were not too many paintings to make the experience overwhelming the collection provided some 'excellent' and 'interesting' works of art.

- **Curatorship and Interpretation**

Curatorship and interpretation were only mentioned in a minimal capacity [Theme apparent: 2 times]. The curatorial hand was acknowledged as one respondent mentioned how the paintings were 'well presented' for an effective viewing experience. Another respondent also commented on the enlightening nature of the guided tour.

- **Sense of History**

The sense of history was mentioned in relation to the environment and the paintings [Theme apparent: 4 times], which both provided an opportunity to learn about and experience the past.

- **Geographical/cultural identity and contextualisation**

Minimal demonstration of this theme was provided through direct comparison with visits to other specific art galleries for cultural contextualisation [Theme apparent: 1 time]. This was also an atypical example of a respondent using their narrative for this question to provide a response that was not wholly affirmative:

Visited Edinburgh Art Gallery last year. This one is better, but not as striking as the Hermitage in St Petersburg.

- **Temporary exhibitions**

Whilst the temporary exhibitions might relate to 'curatorship' and 'collections', I am addressing this theme in isolation as it was mentioned in the respondent narratives [Theme apparent: 1 time] but will not be included in my research on-going.

Question 4.

Why do you go to art galleries?

This question provided narratives to thematically account for the motivations of people to visit art galleries, which after a thorough review and analysis of the data have been coded and divided into thematic categories.

- **Cultural/Experiential Capital Acquisition**

Many visitors go to art galleries to develop, enhance and consolidate their experiential and cultural capital through further acquisition [Theme apparent: 13 times]. The art gallery provides 'personal enrichment', whilst 'expanding cultural knowledge at the same time'. The art gallery is a receptacle of culture, art and history that often offers a portal 'into yesteryear'. Visitors are able to satiate interest through a 'dose of culture', whilst seeing what 'humans can perceive and illustrate in art'. The art gallery also provides an opportunity to explore the perspectives of others and to learn more about the world through a widening of experience and engagement with history. The experience of visiting the art gallery is often associated with the experiential theme of a 'sense of history', as described by one particular respondent:

*I cherish seeing portraits of people frozen in the tides of time.
Makes one feel inconsequential, but history is important.*

- **Recreational**

Respondents provided accounts in their narratives of visiting art galleries for the recreational purposes of enjoyment and escapism [Theme apparent: 8 times]. The art gallery is deemed a quiet 'place of solitude from the city' that provides 'peaceful time to admire art' in order 'to escape from other routine aspects of... life'. According to the responses from this survey the art gallery also provides interest and enjoyment generally to visitors.

- **Personal Connection**

According to the narratives acquired from respondents, the motivation for visiting art galleries can be dependent on a personal connection [Theme apparent: 5 times]. A most demonstrative example of this is based on subjective taste accountability, where respondents have an 'appreciation of art in general'. These types of visitors enjoy visiting art galleries to satiate their interest. Visitors may have an inherent personal interest in 'culture and beauty', which can be catered for by the art gallery.

- **Professional Connection**

Closely associated with the motivation of 'personal connection' is 'professional connection' [Theme apparent: 2 times]. This was demonstrated by respondents who were visiting Guildhall Art Gallery as part of a training programme to become a gallery tour guide. Another respondent had studied Arts Management and was 'fond of every kind of art', enjoying visiting galleries to develop knowledge of their professional sphere.

- **Acquisition of Knowledge**

The role of the art gallery has long been established as a vehicle for learning and this prevails as an important motivation for visiting [Theme apparent: 2 times]. Respondents provided direct narrative accounts of this motivation through ascertaining that they visit art galleries to '*marvel and learn*', and to gain a better understanding of particular fields, such as art and history.

- **Functional**

The final visitor motivation to emerge from this survey was the logistically functional role of the art gallery [Theme apparent: 1 time]. One particular respondent explained how on this particular visit to the Guildhall Art Gallery they 'knew it was there and it was raining'. Whilst this might be a logistical manoeuvre to take shelter from the rain it could lead to an engaged and affective experience.

It is useful to identify emerging visitor motivations but as one respondent also mentioned, there are '*numerous reasons*' for visiting art galleries, which could be manifested concurrently during one visit.

Affective and Descriptive Vocabulary Used in Experiential Narratives

This is a representation of the descriptive vocabulary used by respondents in their experiential narratives. The list provides an insight into the language used by art gallery visitors to linguistically convey their visitor experience, with particular reference to the affective and emotive impact of the art gallery and paintings (in alphabetical order):

Accessible	Amazing
Appreciate	Beauty/Beautiful
Best	Discovery
Easy	Enjoy
Excellent	Favourite
Friendly	Grace
Impact (visual)	Impressive
Interesting	Intimate
Light	Liked
Love	Lovely
Marvel	Peace
Quiet	Reflect
Spoilt (positively)	Solitude
Surprise	Uncrowded
Unique	Warm

Emerging Anomalies

Within any research there are likely to be anomalies and discrepancies that emerge through the process of data analysis. These anomalies and discrepancies should not impact on the overall outcomes of the research if we are able to acknowledge them and provide accountability. For example, in this on-site survey the majority of participants (nearly 50% of the 17 respondents to the question) perceived that they visited art galleries 'once or twice a month', yet the majority (41%) perceived themselves to have 'amateur' experience of art galleries and 'amateur' experience of paintings. Arguably the respondents might have been completing the questionnaires modestly, hence the answer choice, but it is

virtually impossible to determine if this is the case. It does however highlight how the perception or constructed response of research participants might not always be aligned with actuality, as evident in prior Bourdieuan research (e.g. 1991).

Summary

This survey has developed the foundation for understanding the visitor experience to art galleries and the impact of engaging with paintings. From this I have extracted themes and vocabulary that will be projected onto the analysis of the data collected in the ethnographic research study. The survey has also further substantiated the difficulties of assessing the roles of affect, emotion, mental health and well-being in visitor experience. Through a varied multi-methodological approach to the research it is possible to provide a robust investigation of these visitor experiences, the evaluation of them and recurring emergent themes.

CHAPTER 6: ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH STUDY

THE PILOT ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH STUDY

Introduction

The foundation provided by the survey (online and on-site) indicated that people do have affective and emotive encounters when engaging with paintings, particularly as demonstrated through visiting art galleries. Both the online and on-site surveys also demonstrated that it is possible to identify linguistic expression, vocabulary and themes associated with these experiences. The surveys began to suggest that it is possible to identify elements of the impact of the art gallery and engagement with paintings on mental health and well-being. These surveys were a beginning in enhancing an understanding of the engagement with paintings and art galleries through empirical examples of experience and significant encounters. This initial data required a supplementary in-depth study to further examine and emphasise this information with greater profundity due to the fluid and intangible elements associated with these experiences and encounters. Therefore, I carried out a small-scale ethnographic research study on-site at the Guildhall Art Gallery to further investigate the initial understanding I had begun to develop through the two surveys.

Participants

Originally it was intended that there would be six participants for the pilot study but due to various factors, such as dedication of time and interest levels, only five participants committed to be involved. Initially only people on the MA and PhD courses from the Department of Art, Design and Museology at the Institute of Education (University of London) were approached as I had decided that it would be beneficial to test the pilot with those experienced in the cultural world and who are actively researching in this area. These potential participants were in an informed position to help with the critique and development of the study from their own specialist knowledge and experience. However, it proved difficult to entice participants and eventually only one MA student and one PhD researcher

committed their time to the study.

Following this I approached friends and acquaintances, both within the field of arts and those with non-specialist knowledge.²⁹ This was done through a targeted email and Facebook invitation. From this group three people committed their time to the study. One volunteer had specialist knowledge (art teacher/photographer) and two had general recreational experience of going to art galleries and museums but no specialist knowledge.

Methodology

The intention for the pilot research study was to use a complex and varied multi-methodological approach. Due to the fluid, transient and intangible nature of the concepts being explored it was decided in advance that the best way to create the most expansive and expressive impression of visitor engagement was to combine various methods – to construct a ‘messy method’ (Law, 2004, 2007; Law and Urry, 2004). It would transpire that the original approach used in the pilot study would prove too complex.

The pilot study was based on the Personal Meaning Mapping (PMM) of Falk and Dierking (2000). It was also inspired by a gallery visit guide previously produced by Tate Britain called ‘The ‘_____’ Collection’. In a series of art gallery tour highlight guides based on criteria such as colour, mood or occasion, Tate produced a blank guide for visitors to create their own special collection – with a space for an image, writing and room number for each artwork to be documented, as well as a blank title for the collection.

Inspired by the concept of visual and linguistic mapping, the methodological process for my pilot ethnographic study would consist of participants producing a ‘mood map’ before and after a self-led tour around the gallery, based on the PMM of Falk and Dierking (2000). During the self-led tour participants would then be encouraged to produce a visual and linguistic map of their visit. Participants would

²⁹ ‘Non-specialist knowledge’ is defined as not having studied an arts or museological subject beyond GCSE level.

be able to make notes and drawings, take photos and chart their 'experiential journey' on a map of the gallery, with annotated key to correlate all the associated media. The rich and varied data collected would provide a multi-media experiential narrative that could be correlated and analysed to create individual and collective accounts of visiting the art gallery, from which emerging vocabulary and themes could be identified and coded to produce thematic outcomes.

Prior to carrying out the pilot study the five participants were provided (via email) with Guidance Notes to advise them about the research and their involvement in it (Appendix 9, p. 346). The Guidance Notes outlined the purpose and parameters of the research study. It was also intended that this guidance would inform the participants of their involvement in the study before it commenced. Research participants were informed about the purpose of the study and what role they would play to adhere to ethical principles and guidelines (pp. 133-135). It was also an opportunity to help pre-acclimatise participants to the format of the study they would be involved in so they would hopefully feel comfortable during their involvement in the process.

The pilot study consisted of the following methods:

1) Personal Mood Map:

This was based on the Personal Meaning Maps (PMM) as defined and practiced by Falk and Dierking (2000). As this research focuses on emotion and well-being, rather than meaning-making from the acquisition of factual knowledge, it was decided that it would be useful to gauge the participant's general 'mood' and thoughts prior to a self-led tour around the gallery and afterwards.³⁰

2) Visual Image Capturing:

Participants were given a camera and asked to take photos of anything that really stood out to them, or with which they really engaged. They were

³⁰ The word 'mood' was chosen to encapsulate current thoughts and feelings without delving too deeply in a psychological capacity or encouraging personal disclosures about mental health issues.

advised to do this in the most natural way possible and not to let it impede on their tour around the gallery. These images were used in the interview after the gallery tour to help prompt discussion and ascertain the impact of the visit. The images would also be analysed as a form of data to inform research of the process of engagement in the art gallery.

3) Mapping:

Participants were provided with a map, paper and pencil to document their journey around the art gallery. They were asked to use a key to mark on the map where they had 'significant' thoughts or encounters and then make a note of this thought or encounter on a piece of paper. Participants were also asked to annotate the map with reference to where they took photos using the same key. The purpose of 'mapping' was to attempt to create a visual and semantical journey, or multi-media experiential narrative, of their visit. Any drawings or notes made as part of the self-led tour would also form part of the experiential map, with correspondence to the key encouraged. The collected data would be used as a prompt for the subsequent interview and also for data analysis as part of the overall research.

4) Interview:

Following the self-led tour of the gallery and completing the second stage of the 'Personal Mood Map', I would carry out an interview with each participant. The interview would give the participant a chance to express their feelings, thoughts and opinions about the visit to the gallery. There were five open-ended prompt questions to help instigate responses but these were loosely used in a conversational manner to help guide (but not lead) the participant to talk about their experience (Appendix 10, p. 348). It is acknowledged that the subsequent interview provides the possibility that the participant will re-negotiate the meaning of their experience to produce a new interpretation or 'false memories' (p. 93-94) through social interaction and the linguistic expression of experience.

5) Experience Questionnaire:

Each participant was supplied with a general questionnaire about their experience of engaging with paintings and going to galleries. This questionnaire was based on the online survey, 'Engaging with Paintings' (Appendix 11, p. 349).

The Process

- Arrival:

Each participant arrived at the Guildhall Art Gallery at their allotted time. I met them in the foyer and directed them to the cloakroom and facilities so they could prepare themselves.

- Brief:

I briefed each participant whilst sitting on a bench in the main part of the gallery (a knowingly social interaction). The brief consisted of an outline of the research study (similar to that provided in the 'Guidance Notes to Participants'); completing a Consent Form (Appendix 12, p. 350); and being given the opportunity to ask any questions. Each participant was provided with a map, some paper, a pencil, a camera and timer (if they did not have their own) to alert them when the 30-minute time period for the self-led tour had concluded.

Each participant was advised about the process of 'mapping' their self-led tour (as described above). This map and the accompanying key would be used to provide a visual and linguistic representation of their journey around the gallery and spatially locate elements of the experiential logogenesis. Whilst participants were encouraged to record their 'journey' around the gallery, it was emphasised that the most important aspect was to proceed with their visit as naturally as possible. It is acknowledged that the research participants would unavoidably be consciously aware of their involvement in the research and the natural experience would be partially

impacted by being encouraged to document the experience.

- Personal Mood Map: Part One:

Each participant was asked to fill in the 'Personal Mood Map'. I also advised the participants that I was interested in what they were thinking and feeling at that present time and that it could be articulated in words, sentences or drawings. I also explained the general premise of the 'Personal Mood Map' to each participant and told them that they would be completing it with subsequent responses following their self-led tour.

- Self-led Gallery Tour:

Each participant was then given 30 minutes to take a self-led tour around the Guildhall Art Gallery. They were asked not to go into the amphitheatre due to it being unrelated to the research and potentially detrimental to the gallery experience because of the unique and unusual nature of its presence. Participants were also asked not to go into the Exhibition Gallery, which shows temporary exhibitions. I waited discretely in the gallery or amphitheatre to avoid imposing on the self-led tour and waited until the 30 minute time-frame was up. Following this we reconvened in the Victorian Gallery (main gallery) to commence with the rest of the research study process.

- 'Personal Mood Map': Part Two:

Following the self-led tour the participants were given an opportunity to use the facilities and have a 10 minute break. Following this we either took a seat in the corner of the gallery or outside of the gallery (weather dependent) in the courtyard to proceed with the latter parts of the study.

First the participant was presented with their 'Personal Mood Map' to annotate with their current mood and thoughts following their self-led tour around the gallery, in a different colour to the initial documentation. This 'Personal Mood Map' would be used as data for my own research and not form part of the interview process.

- Interview:

I made use of the qualitative research method of the interview through an interpretation of 'empowerment evaluation', where the participant reflects on their experience in the art gallery and self-evaluates their engagement (Fetterman and Wandersman, 2005; Pringle, 2000). This would also help cultivate ethical research as the participant was in the position of constructing their own verbalised experiential narrative through deciding how they respond to the prompts.

I commenced the interview with each participant, making a recording on a digital voice recorder. The first prompt question was used to initiate the interview and then I tried to let the interview flow naturally from there, using the other prompt questions when necessary. I also attempted to talk as little as possible to provide the participants with the opportunity to express themselves without being led or influenced by my comments.

Following the interview, whilst the digital recorder was still on, the participants were asked if they had any further questions or comments. This concluded the recorded interview.

- Informal Conversation:

After completing the established elements of the methodology I had an informal conversation with each of the participants about their thoughts on my research and their involvement in the research study.

- Experience Questionnaire:

The participants were provided with time to complete an Experience Questionnaire (Appendix 11, p. 349). This data was collected and correlated to give an overview of the pilot participants (and subsequently the official research study participants).³¹

³¹ The data from this questionnaire was used for reference.

Feedback Questionnaire

Following the pilot research study I emailed each of the participants with a follow-up questionnaire to receive feedback on the research methodology (Appendix 13, p. 351). Out of the five participants two responded and this was used to inform the development of the methodology and aims of the research for the official research study.

This concluded the process of the pilot research study. From the data that was collected outcomes were ascertained and a proposal for the development determined.

Outcomes

From the data collected from the pilot research study there were various emerging themes. Whilst the content, comments and choices of each of the participant's contributions varied there were themes that could be applicable across all the participants. These corresponded with the previous research, particularly the on-site survey, and were as follows:

- Tangible Environment
- Intangible Environment
- Collections
- Curatorship and Interpretation
- Artistic Execution
- Orientation
- Expectations
- Memory
- Impact of Scale
- Humanistic Empathy
- Personal Connection (including professional)
- Acquisition of Knowledge
- Sense of History
- Cultural/Geographic Identity and contextualisation

- Revelation/Novelty/Discovery
- [Social interaction: an unplanned interaction occurred in one instance between a participant and a member of staff.]

Analysis

The process of analysis for the pilot study at the Guildhall Art Gallery was an in-depth exploratory examination in pursuit of the discovery or revelations of themes and linguistic execution. First of all the data for each participant was collected and correlated. This data included the interview transcript, any notes and photos taken by the participant, the 'Personal Mood Map', completed questionnaire and subsequent feedback. Through this I was able to create an individual 'Participant Profile' for each of the participants involved to provide a narrative of their experience as well as some insight into their wider experience of art galleries and paintings. From this it was possible to carry out manual coding to organise the themes and language extracted from the data. As this process was individually carried out for each participant the Descriptive Codes became organically self-evident and were then used to apply to the subsequent data, as well as to develop it. Through application of this coding the data and theoretical narratives were transformed into a coherent and succinct account or individually applied narrative. These narratives then provided a general visitor profile based on individualised experience to account for types of engagement and outcomes of the gallery visiting experience. This is an abbreviated generalisation of the overarching thematic experiential narratives that emerged from the data analysis:

General experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of research; constraints/parameters of research • Personal preference/ subjective taste accountability • Environment (tangible/physical)/ambience (intangible atmosphere) • Physical/built environment of surrounding area. – al fresco feeling compared to great piazzas such as San Marco in Venice • Expectations/pre-conceptions (e.g. because of 'awareness of research'; looking at website) • Personal connection/association with paintings,
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> relating to personal identity • Psycho-geography (e.g. disorientation) • Novelty/variation of experience (i.e. new experience) - outside usual 'zone of proximity' • Collections (paintings/busts – associated with personal taste) • Curatorial context (e.g. picture hanging, interpretation) • Interpretation (subjective)/acquisition of knowledge • Temporary intrigue (e.g. temporary element such as installation of bomber in courtyard outside of art gallery) • Threshold affect and fear/physical liminality (e.g. security guards and bag check different to other gallery experiences); gallery found both intimidating and welcoming (e.g. the participant felt more comfortable when the staff knew that the researcher was expecting them for involvement in the research) • External aural imposition (e.g. noisy security guards) • Engagement (e.g. interesting collections, associated with collections) • Disengagement/disenchantment/disappointment (e.g. Curatorial frustration – labels not next to paintings) • Intrigue/inspire interest (e.g. participant could look at more; will seek out further information; would like to come back again) • Affect (e.g. direct expression of 'intrigue' or 'romance' of paintings; asserting emotional over intellectual)
Memorable Aspect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collections – paintings and busts, associated with subjective taste accountability; seeing paintings recognised and 'liked' • Curatorial context (e.g. positioning and connection of artworks) • Artistic/stylistic execution of artworks • Social interaction – meeting a member of staff • Physical environment (e.g. size of the gallery and layout; accessible; not overwhelming; no 'emotional destabilisation') • Enjoyment (e.g. from visual engagement with paintings) • Historical role of paintings (e.g. interest in development of artistic and visual media) • Being a '<i>good reminder of ... the power of art</i>' • The '<i>romantic pull</i>' of paintings

Memorable Paintings (and photos)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size • Spiritual/religious significance • Personal association (e.g. invoke personal narrative from life experience; infantile empathy; personal projection of memories) • Focus and framing on a detail within a painting • External impact (e.g. camera flash on photo taken giving added dimension) • Spiritually/religiously affective • Stylistic qualities and execution – visual engagement (e.g. colour; bright; detailing) • Affective (e.g. evocative, captivating, intriguing, curiosity, nostalgia, sadness, reflection, humour) • Humanistic empathy (association with emotions, e.g. illicit love in Rossetti; maternal connection in Leighton) • Narrative • Misinterpretation – projection of own narrative • Parameters/constraints of research – not having enough time to engage • Personal preference/taste and interest • Curation (e.g. contextual relationship between works) • Psycho-geography • Moral empathy and contradiction (e.g. finding a scene of something essentially disturbing actually a ‘beautiful’ image)
Gallery (experience) comparison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collections • Personal taste (e.g. engaging with favourite artist) • Prolonged immersion • Expectations/disappointment • Accessibility (visual and psychological) • Awareness of research (e.g. promoted consciousness of experience leading to more reflective and enjoyable experience) • Favourable • Social/populated environment (e.g. less busy and quieter than many of the larger more well-known galleries) • Lack of promotion of collections and instigated engagement/interpretation • Lack of curatorial voice/direction • Parameters of research (e.g. enhancing experience – use of camera helping one participant think more about why engaged with particular paintings and encouraged to make connections)
Reason for visiting art galleries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual engagement • Personal interest/subjective taste accountability

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal exploration/development • Cultural exploration/development (e.g. <i>'to connect with other moments in history; other cultures; other creative people – other means of expressing emotion'</i>) • Affective (e.g. evocative, humorous, transcendence, escapism, liminality, immersion, escapism, relaxing, thought-provoking, <i>'culturally warming'</i>, powerful, overwhelming, immersive, absorbing) • Enjoyment • Professional/career • Inspiration • Sense of history • Acquisition – experiential, cognitive and knowledge
Additional comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contextual/temporal differentiation (i.e. <i>'regenerative and re-imagined engagement'</i> (pp. 83-84) • Most memorable gallery visit (fainting at the Louvre; most memorable painting, disappointment of the Mona Lisa; most memorable exhibition, disgust/disturbing)

Feedback

Whilst the feedback supplied by participants from the pilot ethnographic research study was limited it did raise two points. Firstly, there was a suggestion that the ethnographic research study should be carried out at different art galleries to produce a comparative study. Whilst this would be a significant and credible pursuit it would not be feasible for this research. Secondly, it transpired that the methodology employed was overly complicated and exacerbated conscious awareness of being involved in a research study, overly impeding the sense of a naturalistic, 'real world' art gallery visit.

Development

Based on feedback from the participants in the pilot ethnographic research study, and my own observations, the proposed methodology was adapted and refined for the actual study. The main issue that arose was the over-complicated and

convoluted multiple methodological devices used in pursuit of creating a thorough and in-depth narrative of the experience of each participant. In encouraging participants to create a 'map' of their experience – through photography, note-taking, drawing and annotation to a map of the gallery – the actual visiting experience was impeded and participants became overly conscious of the research parameters. Participants were led in their visiting experience and thought processes through the use of this visitor-facilitated multi-media data collection. The visiting experience was therefore not as natural as possible, given the unavoidable awareness that this was a research study. In contrast, one participant claimed that over-awareness of the topics of the research and the collection of media for their 'experiential journey' around the gallery enhanced their experience. This was not otherwise the case with the rest of the participants and it was decided that the data would be more compelling if the participants were not over-thinking their role as a visitor or participant. The participant would be encouraged to consciously consider their visiting experience in the interview stage of the process, which would not impede the actual visit. The 'Personal Mood Map' was entirely dismissed for the same reason of overly informing the participant to the detriment of their experience and the research outcomes.

The final methodology for the ethnographic research study would consist of a 30-minute self-led gallery tour, followed by an interview and the completion of the general visitor experience questionnaire. Whilst the participants would still be provided with Guidance Notes in advance, and briefed about their involvement in the study when they arrived at the art gallery, this would be much more general and vague information so as not to over-influence. Participants would still be offered paper, a pencil and camera but be able to decide whether they would like to use them or not. The choice would be based on their usual, natural visiting habits and not for the purpose of creating a detailed experiential map for my research.

Summary

The pilot ethnographic research study provided an opportunity to trial the

methodology for the small-scale ethnographic research study, whilst making informed amendments for the purpose of the official study. The main disjuncture arose from the desire to collect as much varied information from the participants as possible through mixed-media to map a narrative experiential journey whilst not overly informing or leading. Therefore, the pilot provided empirical evidence that a simplification of the methodology would be preferable for retaining the most authentic visitor experience possible for the purposes of replicating this for my research.

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH STUDY

Introduction

Being informed by the survey and the pilot ethnographic research study, the official small-scale ethnographic research study at the Guildhall Art Gallery collected experiential narratives from a group of pre-planned visitors. The intention was to determine elements of the visitor experience, including the role of affect, emotion, mental health and well-being. Based on the simplification of the methodology from the pilot study the focal point of the official study was the interview. The outcomes from these interviews were used to provide a deepened insight of the visiting experience to art galleries and further investigate the linguistic expression of intangible elements of the visiting experience and engagement with paintings. The participants involved in the study also completed a general questionnaire to ascertain their perceived experience of art galleries and paintings.³² From the analysis and presentation of the outcomes of this study, the following part of the thesis will demonstrate more conclusive elements of affect, emotion, mental health and well-being as emerge from the evaluative process of assessing visitor experience.

³² The data from this questionnaire was used for reference.

The Problem of Participants

A significant element of this research was finding participants who would be willing to be involved. Despite attempts to engage potential participants through the Guildhall Art Gallery (including their social media tools), through my research university and through the use of the Internet as a marketing tool (Facebook, Twitter, email) there was initially only one response – from an art student studying at a London university, who would be the first and only participant recruited in this way. This participant was also a member of the 'Re-hang' group, a youth panel that is involved in the Guildhall Art Gallery through consultation and voluntary assistance in exhibitions. As the participant had just embarked on involvement in this group he had visited the gallery before but was not overly familiar with the collections.

One solution for recruiting other voluntary participants would have been to wait at the gallery and attempt to recruit voluntary participants on site. However, prior experience of visitor studies on the ground in cultural organisations led me to believe that in the majority of cases people were not willing to dedicate a large amount of time to completing visitor research whilst they were in the middle of their visit. As I wanted to carry out an in-depth interview it was therefore decided that I would need to inform people in advance that the whole process (briefing, the self-led tour, interview and questionnaire) would take approximately an hour. It was decided that this would have potentially dissuaded people from participating in the research thus an alternative solution was required.

After much consideration, it was decided that I would approach the MA students from the Museum and Galleries in Education course at my research university to establish if there would be any potential participants. These students would be informed in Museology to varying degrees through their interest and experience of cultural organisations but this was not considered to be detrimental to the outcomes of my research. Whilst the participants were researching education through museums and galleries, hence representing a proportion of art gallery visitors who come from a cultural discipline background, they actually had varying levels of knowledge and experience of art galleries and paintings. As my research

focuses on experience of paintings and art galleries by those who have had some experience this was representative of the intended participants for my research. Also, many of the MA students in fact came from different professional and academic backgrounds, providing a varied perspective of visitor experience. Three additional participants were recruited who were not enrolled on the MA course but had at least some experience of visiting art galleries and engaging with paintings. Their professional backgrounds varied, further injecting relevant variety and variability into the study.

Despite the initial problematic attempts to acquire participants this selection is deemed suitable for the purposes of my research. The problematic nature of the recruiting process also provided me with the ability to be flexible and creative in my approach to research – a valid skill in the face of the risk of difficult situations arising in any research career. As the socio-economic, professional and ethnic background would not be relevant to this research the selection of volunteer participants would not be problematic. This is particularly relevant due to the emphasis on experience.

Methodology

The official research study replicated the pilot study but in a simplified and more ambiguous approach:

1) Visual Image Capturing and Documentation:

The participants were given the option of taking a camera, paper and pencil on their self-led tour if they would like to document their experiential journey in any way. This was an entirely optional and tangential facet of the main methodology. Participants were recommended to use or not use these resources as they would on a usual visit to an art gallery or museum.

2) Interview:

Replicated from the pilot study (Appendix 10, p. 348). This was the methodological core of the ethnographic study.

3) Experience Questionnaire:

Replicated from pilot study (Appendix 11, p. 349).

4) Follow-up questionnaire (via email):

All participants were sent a follow-up questionnaire based on the prompt questions from the interview, as replicated from the pilot study (Appendix 14, p. 352). This was used to carry out a comparative assessment of the visiting experience and retrospective reflection. As well-being is often perceived as accumulative over time this would contribute to an understanding of the temporal implications of the visit for the research after time had passed.

Analysis

Based on the understanding and information garnered from the surveys and pilot ethnographic research study, I used the thematic devices established through coding as a framework for analysis. For the purpose of substantiating each of the themes anecdotally I supplemented the data with relevant quotes, which humanises the information. Whilst I have ascribed specific quotes to each of the themes for the purpose of providing examples, many of the quotes used could fall into many of the different thematic devices. I have chosen each one accordingly due to their relevance and effectivity. Also, whilst any spelling errors have been corrected for presenting the quotes in the thesis the wording has not been altered or reordered in any other way. Many of the participants spoke English as a second language so these quotes are reproduced exactly from how they presented their responses conversationally.

The data associated with paintings will be presented through corresponding the semantical responses with reference to illustrations of the relevant images in the Appendices (Appendix 1, pp. 309-323). This will provide the reader with the opportunity to gain an understanding of the image the participant was engaging with when they made the related statement through the presentation of this surrogate. Whilst each encounter is individualistic, subjective and responsive to an

array of variables, the themes and vocabulary are extracted from the data to provide a general understanding of visitor experience and engagement – either substantiating the themes and vocabulary from the analytical framework or by the contribution of any additional ones that arise.

The narratives of the interview transcripts were analysed through the thematic framework under a list of 16 headings, with related comments being assigned to each one. The thematic devices that made up the conclusive framework are:

- Expectations
- Tangible Environment (physical/architectural elements)
- Intangible Environment (e.g. ambience)
- Orientation
- Collections
- Curatorship and Interpretation
- Artistic Execution
- Memory
- Impact of Scale (art gallery and paintings)
- Humanistic Empathy
- Personal Connection and Association
- Knowledge Acquisition
- Sense of History
- Cultural/Geographic Identity and Contextualisation
- Revelation (novelty)
- Naturalistic Phenomena

These themes have been tentatively divided into two categories – the ‘constructed stimuli’ and the ‘elusive affect’. Similar to the ‘tangible’ and ‘intangible’ terminology as applied to the environment of the art gallery these two terms signify the physicality of some of the themes and the indistinguishability of others. The ‘constructed’ themes are the five themes that have a dimensional physicality that can be directly sensorially perceived and experienced. These are the tangible

environment (physical/architectural elements); collections; curatorship and interpretation; artistic execution; and scale. The 'elusive' themes are the eleven themes that do not have such an obvious dimensional physicality and are hence more difficult to definitively capture or define. These are: expectations; intangible environment; orientation; memory; humanistic empathy; personal connection; knowledge acquisition; sense of history; cultural/geographic identity and contextualisation; revelation; and naturalistic phenomena. All of these themes and concepts are interrelated and difficult to compartmentalise for the purposes of understanding the visitor experience to the art gallery and the engagement with paintings. I am however going to attempt to define the themes as effectively as possible to develop understanding of the experience as captured through the data from the ethnographic research study at the Guildhall Art Gallery.

Thematic Analysis

Due to the difficulty of researching the visitor experience based on the multiple variables and intrinsically interlinked nature of all the components (as represented in the thematic framework for example), the analytical explanation is almost infinite so this is an attempt to present the information and most evident emerging themes in as coherent and concise a format as possible. Many of the themes are inter-linked and cannot realistically be considered in isolation. Also, it seems to be the 'self' that is most evidentially reflected (Lacan, 2001; pp. 91 and 96) in the analysis of engaging with paintings in the art gallery. It is difficult to generalise experiential outcomes and themes for the purpose of thematic coding due to this subjectivity. Through in-depth analysis palpable themes have emerged to the point that no more themes have arisen, i.e. all data fits into the themes already devised through the research process. This produces analytical saturation where the data has been exhausted and cannot be assessed any further. The thematic framework produced through the process of analysis, and used for analysis, can now be applied directly to subsequent research and evaluation, attributing each of the themes to experiential narratives to see what impacted the visitor and in what ways.

THEMATIC ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK AND INTEGRAL DEVICES

Tangible Environment

The tangible environment is based on those components that are physically constructed and architecturally palpable. For the purposes of this research the 'tangible' is predominantly associated with the built environment of the art gallery and its surrounding area. It also includes any other physical elements within the gallery, such as the interior decoration and all other physical amenities within the gallery space. The collections within the gallery are also 'tangible' but due to the centrality of their role within this research they will be addressed separately under their own thematic device. The tangible components of any art gallery or museum unavoidably impact the visitor experience, and are often designed purposefully to do so (Macleod, 2005; Newhouse, 1998; O'Doherty, 2000). Through using one art gallery as an example, it is possible to identify the thematic elements that would be applicable to all similar cultural spaces. Whilst these particular examples are unique in their specificity, of the art gallery and the individual, they highlight elements embedded within all museums and art galleries that impact the visitor experience and the resulting emotional and psychological outcomes, potentially affecting mental health and well-being.

The visitor experience of the Guildhall Art Gallery, based on an analysis of the data collected from the participants, presented a dichotomy between the affirmative (positive) and destabilised (negative) impact of the tangible environment, with the former being the most evident. Participants predominantly enjoyed the space of the gallery, with the resonating elements being the small and manageable size, the open space, and the presence of light (both natural and artificial). The perceived 'sense of history' of the building was also commented on, which represents the cultivated impact and architectural gravitas of a relatively contemporary building through using historic referents (Armstrong, 2005: 67-69) (p. 99).

The first tangible element to impact on the visitor experience was the architectural approach to the art gallery. The arrival at the art gallery also represents the thematic element of 'expectations'. The courtyard where the gallery is located is

part of the City of London Corporation's Guildhall, housing other civic buildings and a church. This creates an experiential impression before the visitor even crosses the threshold of the actual art gallery. One participant, Marcus, defined the arrival as 'the approach, the framing, the context' of the subsequent gallery visit. These are considered as tangible elements due to the integrally prominent role of the built environment but are also interrelated with intangible elements and outcomes, such as 'quiet' and a sense of 'privacy', as will be discussed further subsequently. Marcus and Sally were the two participants who most demonstrably focused on the arrival at the art gallery and the influence of the tangible, built environment as part of their experience:

I always find walking towards the Guildhall, it's just extraordinarily situated for an art gallery because you've got this unbelievable financial centre of the world almost, and this mixture of beautiful old buildings and some good modern buildings, but some pretty awful modern buildings. And then you come into this space, which when you compare it with so many museums, feels very quiet, almost private. So, in a sense for me that always sort of frames going in there rather nicely – there aren't many people, it's rather peaceful, it feels terribly civilised and so on.

Marcus

I feel as though the gallery is an amazing space, with a lot to see and obviously a lot of history going on here.

Sally

The 'sense of history' displayed in Sally's narrative is another thematic component, which is also evident in the experience of the tangible environment and will be included here for its relevance to accounts of architecture. The impression of historicity given by the tangible environment of the relatively recently architecturally constructed space 'frames' and 'contextualises' the experience for some of the participants:

I think that the building as well is helping to the experience. I mean I love the stones... It's something special, something warm... The feeling that here has been such a long long time having people live in this... that you are feeling an atmosphere or something... And the colours of the walls and the carpet are keeping you warm as well as the atmosphere.

Pippa

The historicisation of the building is one element conducive to the overall impact of the physical space. One of the most evident elements considered by participants of their general experience of the tangible environment was the size and openness of the art gallery, with 'plenty of space to move around' and a 'balance between space and paintings' (Pippa). The 'impact of scale' is another element of the thematic framework, as discussed in more detail subsequently.

Within the art gallery space, the interior decoration also had an impact on the participants, including mention of the stained glass windows commissioned by various Worshipful Companies of the City of London. The interior decoration was provided through both positively and negatively linguistically expressed outcomes, with one participant thinking 'they need to update the slightly gaudy carpet' (William); and others being complimentary about the affirmatively affective impact of the carpet, light and decorative devices. Despite participants specifically highlighting interior decorative elements they did not directly relate these to the viewing experience so it is difficult to decipher how the interior decoration impacted on engaging with the paintings.

Another physical element that emerged from the data was the impact of light, both natural and artificial. This could be arguably intangible through its incandescent illumination but is presented here as a physical entity as it is visually identifiable. The natural light, as well as its refraction through the stained glass windows, was particularly emphasised in description of the general experience by one participant, who liked 'the effect of the light in the space and the windows and the way that they were with the light' (Anna).

Despite this complimentary elevation of the impact of light there was also the derogation of the artificial lights in the art gallery combined with the glass on some of the paintings. The combination created a 'barrier between you and the paintings' (Pippa), imposing on the experience of engagement. Only one participant asserted this view but were very fervent in their opinion and the detrimental impact the reflection of the light had on accessing the paintings – physically, emotionally and psychologically. This does not necessarily detract completely from engagement with, and enjoyment of, the paintings.

Physical elements are able to create barriers to engagement; they are also able to produce a pleasantly perceived visitor experience. Something as simple as a bench in front of a painting provides a 'comfortable' experience for the visitor to relax and take their time engaging with an artwork (Baker, 2011). It seems this is particularly relevant when a painting is highlighted and interpreted individually in depth, providing an amenity that facilitates the ability to 'enjoy for longer if you want' (Pippa).

These are some of the elements of the tangible environment that relate to the visitor experience of the art gallery and the accessibility of engaging with paintings. For this study the tangible environment has mainly been narrativised through experiential accounts of the building and its surrounding area; the interior decoration; the light; and the public amenities, such as benches. This tangible environment would also extend to any physically constructed and palpably sensed entity within the parameters of the visitor experience, including physical aspects of the 'entrance narrative' (pp. 71-72). These tangible entities further augment the visitor experience through an alliance with the entities of the 'intangible environment'.

Intangible environment

The 'intangible environment' is based on those components of art gallery experience that are not identifiably physically constructed and visually or tangibly evident. They are associated with the more elusive elements of the environment of

the art gallery as perceived by the visitor, such as the ambience; feeling of space; 'threshold affect'; as well as other sensory elements such as the aural impact of quiet and tranquillity. These intangible elements are interrelated with the other thematic devices and based on, as well as constructed by, visitor perception and self-narrative.

The overriding emergent aspect of the intangible environment in the ethnographic study was the quietness of the Guildhall Art Gallery. Although this is dependent on the more tangibly identifiable social aspect of other visitors it is here identified as intangible due to the ambient affect the social dynamism creates through the number of visitors. The lack of other visitors and the general quiet inside the gallery provided a space contrary to the environment of the bustling City outside through the visitor being 'in this submerged, quiet environment, where you don't have to see people' (Robert). This was in stark comparison to the abundance of people in the surrounding areas. The Guildhall Art Gallery is conceived as a tranquil environment for immersion and escapism, as also expressed by other participants, particularly in comparison to larger and more populated art galleries in Central London:

The last art gallery I think I went to was the National Portrait Gallery and that was only a couple of months ago. And obviously because I guess it was the National Portrait Gallery... there are a lot more people around there, whereas here because it's sort of out of the way it's a lot quieter, and there's a more contemplative atmosphere so you can look at the pictures and appreciate them a bit more.

Aaron

These expressions of the affirmatively affective impact of the Guildhall Art Gallery are further substantiated through general expressions of the 'feel' of the gallery. The gallery is perceived as 'warm...very welcoming' (Edith) and 'familiar' (Fiona). This familiarity is conducive to empowering the visitor through providing a comfortable atmosphere, though this will be based on prior experience or confidence and might not be the same for those who have never, or hardly ever, visited art galleries previously. Fiona felt comfortable with the general experience

of visiting art galleries but this particularly gallery provided an environment of a clandestine visit to a venue that is not normally accessible. She felt like she was 'going round somewhere that people don't normally go' (Fiona).

Fiona did not elaborate on the feeling of visiting somewhere secret and hidden but through intonation in the interview it sounded as though this was an affirmative affect that created privileged access and inspired excited intrigue. There could be a dichotomist interpretation of this experience – either creating excitement and intrigue through being in a 'secret' location; or creating discomfort and anxiety from being somewhere you are not supposed to be, feeling disempowered and resulting in the disenchanted experience (pp. 98-99). This would likely be based on the level of familiarity and confidence of visiting art galleries and civic buildings.

Unusual elements of experience are able to destabilise comfort and familiarity, even for those who are used to visiting art galleries. This was particularly evident for two participants in respect of the security at the Guildhall Art Gallery, where your bag is checked by being processed through an x-ray machine by security guards due to the civic and prominent nature of the building. It was thought to be 'quite intimidating' (Robert). This form of security, though necessary, can cause a 'threshold affect' of discomfort and intimidation. However, the friendliness of the members of staff soon put visitors at ease despite their initial confusion and apprehension.

The other aspect of a populated environment is the imposition on the viewing experience of the individual, particularly the individual as 'explorer' (Falk and Dierking, 2012), where the visitor wants to have their own experiences and make discoveries themselves through investigation. One example was a participant being conscious of a guided tour ahead of them – though beneficial for visitors who desire greater interpretive media this could be detrimental to the individual visitor on a self-led journey of discovery:

I was quite conscious that there was a tour ahead of me so I was trying to keep away from that, so I could sort of look at the paintings on my own rather than this person telling me about, or knowing anything about it which I didn't know before.

Aaron

There were other elements that provided a barrier between the visitor (participant) and an entirely affirmatively engaged and affective experience. For example, in direct opposition to the general esteem amongst participants for the quiet, reflective atmosphere of the gallery, one particular participant felt the gallery needed more visitors to create a dynamic and vibrant atmosphere, particularly of young people. Robert thought it would 'be really beneficial for the gallery' to encourage more young people as 'it's the new generation now, just beginning' (Robert). Faye further substantiated the absence of a greater populace with relation to members of staff providing a welcome and guidance on arrival for the visitor. Faye felt that there wasn't 'any kind of guidance in terms of people when you arrived' (Faye) in comparison to other art galleries. Within this representation of the populated environment it seems there needs to be enough people to provide an atmosphere but not too many as to create an intrusion on experience.

From the perspective of the art gallery it is difficult to account for all aspects of the intangible environment. However, it is useful to develop knowledge of different elements of this thematic device and how they affect the visitor experience as this could impact on psychological outcomes, such as mental health and well-being.

Collections

The narratives about the collections made by research participants were predominantly about the genres and historical time periods covered, with many experiential narratives including mention of the historic paintings of London or the Victorian paintings, as well as a general 'sense of history'. Participants found it 'interesting' 'seeing some of those old paintings of London' (William) and to find

‘special paintings from the Victorian and Pre-Raphaelist [sic]’ (Pippa).

As well as the general appreciation of the topical and historical nature of the paintings, there were more direct references to how the collections were related to personal topical interest through ‘personal connection’:

I like it a lot because a lot of the paintings had reference to theatre and in some Greek myths... I am from Greece so I had a personal interest in those. So I like theatre a lot and I like to see how the images can combine those two sectors. It was interesting for me.

Anna

The ‘artistic and stylistic execution’ of the paintings through perceived skill were identified by the participants, elevating the perception of the status of the gallery as having an impressive collection. This was supplemented by the sheer surprise at the perceived quality and expanse of the collection due to having no prior knowledge of the gallery or its collections, relating to ‘expectations’. Participants were ‘surprised’ (Fiona) by the ‘wonderful paintings’ (Marcus), with the majority of related responses being based on personal predilection, and not a dislike of the collections. There were some examples of ‘taste’ where participants provided accounts of paintings they did not personally engage with favourably, due to the content or style.

The mentions of the collections at the Guildhall Art Gallery were related to other devices from the thematic framework for analysis, including personal connection, sense of history and cultural identity (of London particularly) as displayed through the artworks. The responses, though subjective, represent how different collections have a different impact on visitors. This is also based on the visitor’s own individualistic agenda and identity, taste accountability and personal visiting profile. It became evident that the collections were the most prominent and memorable aspect of the visit to the art gallery, as one might assume. A substantiation of this is provided as all of the participants mentioned the collections generally, or specific paintings, as at least a part of the most memorable

aspect of their visit to the art gallery. This demonstrates how the tangible environment of the architecture doesn't override the experiential engagement with the paintings (Serota in Beaven, 2011) (p. 70). Even though the gallery has been described as quite an unusual space, being both a civic building and an art gallery, it was the collections that emerged as the most memorable aspect and hence elevated the significance and affectivity of paintings.

Curatorship and Interpretation

In the ethnographic research study the most prominent expression of the curatorial and interpretive influence was the engagement with the descriptive interpretation panels that accompanied the artworks. These were responded to both favourably and critically. One participant 'enjoyed the amount of information' but felt that she 'spent more time reading the information probably than the picture at some points' (Sally). Distraction caused by the interpretive resources was also experienced by other participants, who got 'side-tracked by looking at the labels and reading them' (Aaron) when they were located remotely from the actual paintings. Other participants also ascertained that they preferred greater narrative and suggestions for contextualisation in interpretive resources, 'to create some kind of stories among the collection' (Faye). This is supplemented by considerations of a general introduction to the collections' identifiably divisible thematic space, as presented in the London Galleries at the Guildhall Art Gallery and evident in other London art galleries.

The curatorial approach to display was also commented on by some of the participants, again both favourably and critically, with some enjoying the 'Salon style type of arrangement of the paintings' (Edith), and others finding this meant that 'some of the paintings are a little bit high for the point of view, and the small ones are too low to enjoy' (Pippa). Some participants commended the historical 'salon' approach to paintings as it corroborated the historicity of viewing paintings. In contrast, the accessible isolation of the 'Painting in Focus' (Figure 42, Appendix 1, p. 322) provided a potent and compelling approach to engagement by being

displayed in a room on its own with interpretive panels.³³ This viewing experience is elevated by the tangible amenities in the gallery, such as the bench (as discussed earlier, p. 204), which provides a comfortable viewing experience. An isolationist approach to an individual painting is not highly revered by all participants who, despite enjoying the painting, dispute the approach to display that is perceived as 'oddly presented... because it doesn't fit there. It seems an odd, but quite large, room' (Marcus).

Curatorship and interpretation of the collections is strongly associated with the exploratory role of the visitor and the acquisition of knowledge. Many visitors appreciate some guidance and thematic narrative of the collections but with a layered approach that can be accessed accordingly based on the visitor's needs and desires. This analysis of the collections also represents conflicting perception and predilection of different visitors. The investigation of this overall theme will be further developed in the assessment of other thematic devices, particularly the 'knowledge acquisition' associated with interpretation.

Artistic execution

If works of art are allowed to express their natural eloquence, the majority of people will understand them; this will be more effective than any guidebook, lecture or talk.

(Schmidt-Degener quoted in Bourdieu and Darbel, 2002)

The artistic and stylistic execution of a painting will inevitably have a visual impact on the viewer based on their personal predilection, prior knowledge and experience. For centuries artists have been developing and manipulating media to create different effects and affectivity through the medium of painting – for visual, emotional, psychological, cognitive, cultural, social and political impact. Visitors engage with different paintings in different ways, dependent on a subjectified,

³³ The 'Painting in Focus' at the time of this research study was *The Sleeping Couple* (c. 1658-1660) by Jan Steen (Figure 42, Appendix 1, p. 322). It is assumed that this will be changed in the future to highlight other works from the expansive City of London art collection.

experiential and cognitive agenda, as well as through personal taste accountability. Through the analysis of the experiential narratives collected from participants it was possible to develop an understanding of the approaches to engagement with artistic execution and divide these into themes.

Detail

One of the examples of the artistic execution commented on by participants was the high level of detail, which alludes to the research of Yarbus (1967) who discovered that people ‘tended to look most at those parts of the picture that contained high-contrast and fine detail’. Informed by this research, Livingstone (2008) subsequently deduced that it ‘must be that our peripheral vision picks out those areas of the visual scene with high detail and contrast or potential interest and sends a message to the eye-movement system to plan the next eye movement so that the fovea lands on a part of the visual scene that is rich in information’ (Livingstone, 2008: 78).

Artistic Skill

A participant referred to the perceived artistic skill evident in the paintings, an indication of previous experience of engaging with paintings and artistic literature, as well as an example of personal perception and opinion of artworks. This particular participant seemed to have the most extensive knowledge and experience of art, artists and paintings out of all the participants. This suggests that the accumulation of experiential and cognitive knowledge (‘cultural capital’), or at least confidence in one’s own perspective, is more likely to encourage a critique. The skill of the artist is also related to the concepts and ideas encapsulated by their artworks, as well as a skill for observation of the world – displaying cultural, historical and humanistic empathy:

I mean some of these people could really paint phenomenally well... the Victorians, some of them really could paint, they could paint phenomenally... They’ve still got a lot of real world observation in them.

Marcus

Colour and Light

Many participants mentioned the corporeal components used within a painting, such as the use of colour and light. This provided a visual tool for encouraging engagement, with an emphasis on the attraction of luminosity. Some participants mentioned their personal predilection for colours in the paintings and the way this medium was used to construct an impression of light and vibrancy. There was reference to the dramatic impact of *chiaroscuro*, as particularly seen in the painting *John Philip Kemble, as Coriolanus* (1798) by Thomas Lawrence (Figure 24, Appendix 1, p. 316):

It's quite intriguing. And then you have this fire behind glowing... the whole painting is all covered in black. The colour of the painting is interesting as well. Also, he's wearing this black cloak, covering himself. So almost he's kind of emerging from this darkness. Like his whole face is more into the light.

Robert

Composition

The composition the artist creates within the painting provides visual affectivity, identified by the participants in the research. The spatial structures, positioning and dimensionalisation within the canvas work together to create an intentional affect cultivated by the artist for the purpose of effect and engagement. This aspect of artistic execution was mentioned by many of the research participants and demonstrates the role of the choices made by the artist in affectivity and emotional, psychological and intellectual engagement. The affect or enjoyment might be provided through the use of a 'strange angle' (Edith) (Figure 32, Appendix 1, p. 319); a background that 'has a depth and it's not flat' (Anna) (Figure 37, Appendix 1, p. 321); or with 'just people dancing or lying down' (Sally) (e.g. Figure 26, Appendix 1, p. 317).

Content, Iconography and Narrative

The artist's choice of the objects, subjects and iconography embedded in the painting create paths to engagement for visitors to an art gallery. It is the

composition of these specific elements that provide stimuli for affectivity and emotive response. These components might be for pure visual delight or for psychological provocation. It is the viewers experience, knowledge, preferences and 'agenda' that provide dynamism for the static painting, as seen in an encounter with *Henry VIII and the Barber Surgeons* (c. 1543) by Hans Holbein the Younger (Figure 30, Appendix 1, p. 318):

I really like the pattern on the textile. But then also the fact that it was painted with the carpet crinkled... his hand gesture was really weird. It kind of reminded me of the Renaissance paintings of how Christ generally has very specific hand gestures to mean different things. So I kind of wondered if that was what was going on.

Edith

The stylistic composition of the content and iconography within a painting is further vitalised through narrative – the intended narrative of the painting and the narrative that the viewer projects onto the painting. Whilst some of the participants mentioned the story within the painting it became evident that even when factual knowledge was absent the viewer's own interpretation of the intended 'story' provided an engaged experience. This creates a disjuncture between the argument for the importance of factual information about a painting and the importance of having an engaging experience irrespective of this information. The exploratory nature of some visitors encourages a desire to investigate further and learn more about the painting through 'a sense of this story' (Robert). A catalyst for intrigue is created, provoking an inspiration to find out more following the initially visceral and affectively engaged experience.

Contextualisation

Visitors always bring their own experiential, cognitive and intellectual knowledge to the experience of engaging with paintings, whether or not they have acquired prior factual information about a painting or artist. This engagement consolidates or develops prior knowledge through meaning-making, whilst the prior knowledge informs the experience. The active mutuality of knowledge and experience relies

on contextualisation as was demonstrated in the experiential narratives of the participants. This includes contextualising paintings within other experiences of art, or culturally contextualising a painting within a wider historical and socio-cultural framework. A direct implementation of historically effected and aesthetic consciousness (Davey, 2007; Gadamer, 2004) is created through a combination of this framework with the individual's own subjective context, personal perceptions and experience. These contextualisations are intrinsically linked with other devices from the thematic analysis framework, particularly 'memory' and 'sense of history, as well as the use of narrative of the painting and the viewer. This was seen in an encounter with *La Ghirlandata* (1873) by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (Figure 12, Appendix 1, p. 313):

There was this one painting in particular. It was that one over there, and it's a picture of a detail that I thought was interesting. That painting of, I don't even remember the painter's name... A painting of Jane... It said something about how William Morris was in love with her. No, it was William Morris's wife and the painter was in love with her. And I thought that it was interesting the sort of flower arrangement next to her face. Because wasn't it William Morris that had the sort of flower patterns within his textile designs. I thought well this is sort of a bit weird... I just wanted to take a picture of her and the flowers next to her face. Because I thought I want to remember this for later and see if William Morris actually did have the flower arrangements like that when he designed textiles.

Edith

Affectivity

All of these artistic elements combine to create potential affectivity through visitor engagement. The colour, style, composition, content, iconography and narrative produced by the artist is combined with the self-narrative, contextualisation, agenda and meaning-making of the viewer to create an engaged and affective encounter. As I have discussed, arguably the most effective approach to assessing the occurrence and impact of affectivity is through the experiential narrative and linguistic expression of visitors. Participants in this study provided expressions related to artistic execution that substantiates this claim. They mentioned the theatricality, intrigue, romance and humour of paintings, amongst other affective

outcomes. These outcomes become conducive to the emotional experience, as well as provide potential well-being and mental health outcomes, or at least a momentary emotive encounter.

Expectations

The presence of our physical past creates expectations – expectations that are important parts of our daily lives.

(Stipe, 2003)

The role of expectations is an internationally conceived entity, found prominently in the cultural sector and tourism industry. Whilst the expectations of visitors to an art gallery are often located within the realm of marketing they are also relevant to Museum Visitor Studies. Expectations are most notably based in the pre-planned visit due to the temporal passage between deciding to visit a gallery and the actual visit, but can also become apparent on a more spontaneous visit once the decision has been made to enter the art gallery. In both marketing and Museum Visitor Studies there is a comparative assessment of what the visitor expected and the actuality of the experience – the hope being that the experience at least meets (in the case of positive expectation) or exceeds the expectation. Through analysing experiential narratives of visitors it is possible to identify asserted expectations and how they were met. Subsequently this informs overall understanding of the visitor experience.

The expectations a visitor brings to an art gallery are an integral element of the 'entrance narrative' (Doering and Pekarik, 1996) (pp. 71-72). The majority of the participants for this research study (9 out of 11) had not been to the Guildhall Art Gallery previously so their expectations were based on the visitor as first time explorer, discovering a new place. For this reason the comments that were related to expectations were often aligned with the thematic device of the 'revelatory' experience. Whilst it is not known how many participants accessed pre-visit media

(only 2 mentioned specifically having looked at the website, though this doesn't mean others didn't), the main revelatory factors based on pre-conceived ideas of the gallery and visitor expectations were that the gallery existed at all and the 'quality' of the collections on display. Some of the participants were 'surprised' by the collections, often due to neutral expectations of not knowing what types of artworks would be on display. One participant, Edith (who specified she had not looked at the website), was 'really surprised' on entering the art gallery and discovering it was 'mostly older paintings', particularly as she was used to engaging with Modern and Contemporary art. Faye also 'didn't expect this place to have these kind of paintings' and 'really liked them'.

This sense of 'surprise' is based on a revelatory experience where the outcome is different to the expectation, or if expectations are relatively neutral. The revelation would take place if there was no conscious expectation and the gallery disclosed an experiential encounter outside of a subconsciously conceived normality or assumption. Even when a visitor had some pre-conceived expectations, the revelatory and surprising element could exceed the expectations in an affirmative way, as seen in the case of one participant in the follow-up questionnaire:

After the study I visited the NPG [National Portrait Gallery] twice, once for a small exhibition and again to see the 17th and 18th century paintings. Whilst I enjoyed my experience of the NPG in general, I had an idea of what I would be able to see already. By contrast I had never visited the Guildhall Art Gallery and though I had preconceptions of it I was pleased to see they were entirely wrong and thus I enjoyed the paintings more.

Aaron

The expectations of the participants were all of an affirmative or neutral nature but it is also possible to have a destabilised combination of expectation and actuality where expectations are not met. Arguably this would have a detrimental impact on the immediate, or momentary, sense of mental health and well-being. An accumulation of visits that do not meet expectations could also be conducive to a negative perception of art galleries generally and thus extract these cultural

organisations from potentially being a resource for the promotion of positive mental health and emotional well-being in an on-going capacity. Overall, expectations can play an important role in framing the impact of the visitor experience and affectivity.

Orientation and Psycho-geography

The layout of an art gallery and personal sense of orientation impact the experiential parameters of the visit. This is also related to the thematic device of 'curatorship and interpretation' as the positioning and context of artworks and interpretive media can influence the psycho-geographical perspective of the individual. Through analysing the data from the ethnographic research study it was possible to extract from the participants' experiential narratives any comments associated with the psycho-geographical journey through the gallery space. It became evident that 'orientation' was mentioned minimally and only in relation to disorientation in finding the gallery and inside the gallery, an often negatively perceived aspect of the visitor experience. The Guildhall Art Gallery was considered to be in a location that is 'quite confusing for people' (Robert) and having a 'slightly confusing layout' (William), though this was not perceived by the majority of participants (8 out of 11).

The implication from the gathered data is that visitors generally only consciously perceive the orientation of the art gallery when there is an obstacle or destabilisation, such as a confusing layout or unusual positioning. This does not mean to say that orientation and visitor circulation is not otherwise a factor but that it is not as consciously perceived by the visitor when implemented effectively. For the construction of gallery spaces and for professionals working in the cultural sector, the analysis of the experiential psycho-geography is important for understanding visitor behaviour, motivations and needs, as well as the impact this has on experiential outcomes such as mental health and well-being (e.g. Tschacher and Tröndle in Tschacher and Bergomi, 2011).

Memory and Recognition

Past memories, present experiences, and future dreams of each person are inextricably linked to the objects that comprise his or her environment.

(Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981: ix)

Memory and memorability emerged as one of the most apparent sources of engagement in this research study and is readily identifiable in the literature associated with museums and the cultural sector (Falk, 1988; Falk and Dierking, 1990; McManus, 1993). The projection of memory onto a painting by an individual became conducive to an emotionally engaged and affective encounter. This role of memory was also supplemented by the recognition of paintings from prior experience and knowledge of the visitor. The engaged experience associated with memory was also informed by the popularisation, or celebritisation, of paintings and artists through the technocratic, multi-media marketing of visual imagery. This includes the cultivation of perceived prestige of art by the art market; the sensationalisation of artists through 'blockbuster' exhibitions; press coverage; and the abundant replication of imagery through surrogates.

Memorability was implicit in the ethnographic research study as I used the terminology to frame the prompt questions for the interview – asking participants what was the most memorable aspect of their visit and most memorable painting with which they engaged. The use of the word 'memorable' was intentional to assist in guiding the participant to identify the most evident experiential accounts without leading them, and I was also interested in investigating the elements that make an experience memorable. The account of this theme in the following section focuses on the projection of memory onto paintings, or the remembering of paintings from a time prior to participation in the research project.

Knowledge and Experience of the Visual Image

The most obvious implementation of memory in the visitor experience of engaging with paintings was prior knowledge. This might be the knowledge of particular

paintings or the experiential knowledge of visiting art galleries. One participant, Melinda, saw a painting at the Guildhall Art Gallery that she had recently seen on loan to an exhibition in her home country outside of the UK. This provided an emotive familiarity that made her think of home.

Experiential knowledge, as assessed through analysis of the experiential narratives, elevates the importance of the role of the surrogate for those who have not seen the original painting before. Instead of hindering the experience the recognition created by engaging with a surrogate of the image, such as on the pages of a book, actually seemed to enhance engagement when a visitor discovered that a painting was present in the art gallery – dismissing the loss of the aura (Benjamin, 1935). Whilst participants found affirmative engagement through recognition, it also assumed the status of the surrogate and visual sensibility to encourage visitors to think that ‘maybe there’s some kind of quite interesting paintings around here, or maybe quite well known ones and it piqued my interest’ (Fiona).

Personal Experience

Visitors to art galleries project memories of their personal life experiences onto paintings through a process of active, dialogic engagement, associated with the thematic device of ‘humanistic empathy’. This creates a channel to invoke engagement through personalisation of the subject in a demonstration of the inter/active image (pp. 80-90). One participant found affective and emotive engagement with a painting of a couple, having been recently married herself and discovering it was ‘something personal, something [she] knew before’ (Anna).

Retrospective Visitor Memorability

There is also the importance of the subsequent memorability of the visit to the art gallery and the impact it has on the individual visitor. Some participants mentioned that they like to take photos and notes of galleries, artworks and interpretive panels to remind them of their visit and stimulate further exploration. In these cases the surrogate of the photographic image is used as a visual prompt for memorability. There is a dual role of the museum as a ‘*lieu de mémoire*’ (Rivera-

Oracca, 2009) and the desire of the visitor to create resources for the memorability of a visit. This is applicable across visits to museums and art galleries generally.

Impact of Scale

The 'impact of scale' emerged as a theme in the experiential narratives due to the mention of the size of paintings and the art gallery in a demonstration of embodied engagement. Paintings were identified and contextualised in the experiential narratives as part of the process of engagement with reference to either being noticeably small or large. This is further emphasised by my own auto-ethnographic account of visual and embodied perception of scale (Appendix 15, Auto-ethnography, pp. 353-357).

The assumption, from analysis of my own auto-ethnographic data and that of the participants in the ethnographic study, is that scale provides an affective encounter in relation to the scalability of our own physicality. If a painting is compellingly and expansively much larger than us we are overwhelmed and immersed. The painting takes up a proportionately expansive area of our visual field, often extending beyond the parameters, hence providing a dominating encounter of the imagery in front of us. We have the ability to only be able to take in a proportionately small area of the painting at one time. In opposition to this are small paintings, where the viewer has to get close to the work in order to engage with it and experience the details. Participants had an interest in the skilful execution of the ability to artistically construct scenes on a large scale or with minute details on a small scale. Whether the painting is perceived as being skilfully executed or not the affect and impression of the painting is magnified through sheer augmentation.

The scale of the tangible environment also has an affective impact on the visitor based on variable contributing factors, such as the agenda and experiential capacity of the visitor. For example, some visitors find large buildings impressive whilst others find them overwhelming; some visitors find small buildings intimate and comforting whilst others find them claustrophobic. This is also dependent on the type of building, its structural components, the intangible environment

(including ambience and socially populated environment), and the visitor's own perceptions. The impact of scale could create affectivity and memorability that, collaboratively with other elements, might play a role in outcomes related to mental health and well-being.

Humanistic empathy

Humanistic empathy was the most prevalent and significant theme to arise in relation to the emotionally engaged experience and affectivity of paintings in this research study. The phenomenological dialogue between visitor and painting in the art gallery is largely conceived through an empathetic relationship. The visitor will engage with a painting through their own contextualised experience and knowledge, which as a human will often be associated with an empathy with that which is known to them. If an individual has a recollective experience or knowledge of an element within a painting, as in life, they are more readily able to engage with it through this acquaintance. Or if there is direct humanistic representation within a painting it is possible for the visitor to empathise (Elkins, 2001).

In the experiential narratives collected from participants there was an abundant expression of humanistic empathy with the paintings in the Guildhall Art Gallery collection. This was based prominently on facial expressions, gestures and poses, as well as human emotions and the 'sense perception' (p. 225) of human experience. The emotion displayed through human interaction within paintings seems to be the most prominent evocation of empathy. The dynamic of social occasions and the activities of life are also conveyed as creating a connection through humanistic engagement, as seen in an encounter with *Married for Love* (1882) by Marcus Stone (Figure 37, Appendix 1, p. 321):

... the way that they hold each other, I like. Because she was have a baby and he was looking the other way but he still hold the hand. I like that... I like because actually it's something I feel that it happens through the years. I mean it's something you can capture in this painting and you can have the same in months later from another couple.

Anna

Whilst abstract and conceptual art has less direct humanistic empathy through absence of human figures or context, these paintings can still invoke affective and emotive outcomes. The works of Rothko for example have elicited mutually empathetic perceptions of existence, mortality and spirituality across viewers (e.g. p. 141). Whilst humanistic empathy might be a more identifiably idiosyncratic process of engagement of the types of collection as found in the Guildhall Art Gallery (i.e. with more recognisable forms and human presence), this does not preclude engaging in this way with other types of paintings. The empathetic evocation would however be based on more abstract and thematic intimation. Visual engagement positions us within relation to the world and the people in it producing emotional evocation. This could play a part in the role of mental health and well-being in the visitor experience to art galleries. As humans we endeavour to feel and to relate.

Personal Connection

Personal connection is associated with all aspects of the thematic framework for analysis as it is how we relate to the world around us through phenomenological dialogue. Personal connection is also strongly associated with humanistic empathy and the projection of memories as these are prominent ways in which we make a personal connection. For the purposes of this thematic device I am particularly concentrating on the personal connection made through taste, enjoyment, professional association and the connection with life events of the visitor, including having engaged with particular paintings previously. The entities of taste, enjoyment and experiential association could be applicable to all the devices

of this thematic framework through personal connection.

Taste and Enjoyment

One of the principal ways a visitor makes a personal connection with a painting is through the implementation of subjective taste accountability. This phenomena has seen a dissolution of the wholly elitist origins of aesthetic principles, taste and universal ideal of beauty as seen in Kant (Giovannelli (Ed.), 2012; Kant, 1764, 1790) and Bourdieu (1991, 1993, 1979), though people prevail to be guided by their own personal predilection. Taste might be based within the wider influences of the external world but is also created through the defining and development of identity.

Taste can create connection through 'liking' and 'enjoyment', as well as disconnection through 'disliking' and 'dissatisfaction'. As the reasons for this dichotomy of taste are complex and expansive I will not be able to do justice to its intricacies here. I would however like to demonstrate expressions of taste from the experiential narratives of the participants, that for evaluative purposes could be construed as an engaged experience or a disengaged experience. The taste of 'liking' is also manifested through the perceived sense of enjoyment and a preferential assertion of choice:

I just liked that one. It was peaceful... just you know, flowers, Mum and daughter. Just nice.

Sally
(Figure 28, Appendix 1, p. 317)

I don't really have a great deal of time for art. But I actually quite enjoyed it.

Aaron

Professional connection

Personal connection is evident when visitors have a perceived affinity with an artwork based on their own identity or experience. This can be seen in the way the

professional identity of participants influences their engagement with art galleries and paintings. Robert, as a practicing artist, wanted to 'see what other techniques or paintings have been done before' so he could define where his 'painting fits in'. As a photographer, Edith was interested in the gestures, poses and composition found in some of the paintings, enjoying capturing 'the in between moments'. Professional connection can also provide enhanced engagement – if a painting has been engaged with before in a professional capacity and thus has recognisable content the visitor might spend longer looking because they 'have more things to understand and to explore' (Anna). This adheres to a form of the Bourdieuan concept of 'cultural capital' but does not undermine the affective, visceral experience available to everyone. It is an alternative approach to engagement and not an essential one.

Personal Experiential Connection

One particular participant provided an example of the collaborative impact of memory, humanistic empathy and personal connection through eloquently conveying the relationship between a painting and a life experience, when asked about the most memorable aspect of her visit to the gallery:

I guess the Lord Mayor's painting particularly because I went to the Lord Mayor's Show quite a lot as a kid and then I went again recently last year... it's like really well done and there's loads of stuff to look at in it... people in hats at the top of the building and... all the attractions... And actually the information, there's quite a nice little bit of information... I quite like those details. But it was just... that kind of connection with thinking 'oh, what was it like then', and what was it like when I saw it recently, and so it's kind of quite evocative to me.

Fiona

(Figure 15, Appendix 1, p. 314)

Sense perception

One particular participant displayed a direct example of 'sense perception' or 'sensory transfer' (Tam, 2006), where the engagement with paintings evokes the

sensorial recollection of embodied life experience. Through engaging with *Sun and Moon Flowers* (1889) by George Dunlop Leslie (Figure 28, Appendix 1, p. 317), Anna enjoyed the light as it was like she 'had the sun in front' of her. Sense perception is a form of humanistic empathy based on an embodied lived experience of an occurrence taking place within a painting.

Connection through prior engagement

It emerged from the interview and subsequent analysis of the experiential narratives that a number of the participants had visited the Pre-Raphaelite exhibition that was on at Tate Britain during the time of the research study. It is not apparent if the participants had previous knowledge of this art movement but this is an aspect of their own personal narrative they brought with them to the visit for this research study. The prior engagement with Pre-Raphaelite imagery created an enhanced engagement with a recognisable image from the movement that was located in the Guildhall Art Gallery. *La Ghirlandata* (1873) by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (Figure 12, Appendix 1, p. 313) is stylistically reminiscent of paintings seen in the exhibition at Tate Britain. There were other examples of prior knowledge and experience having an impact on visitor engagement but this is being emphasised as the most prolific example, which provided familiarity and recognition through the process of memorability. Connection through prior engagement is comparable to the implementation of 'cultural capital' made through professional connection – again not undermining the potency of affective, visceral engagement but providing an alternative route to accessing paintings.

Personal connection through defining identity

Participants and visitors find a personal connection to visiting art galleries through the experience actively assisting in defining and developing their own identity. The identity of a visitor influences the visit, whilst the visit in turn has an impact on the cultivation of identity. One particular participant felt that their reason for visiting art galleries was an integral aspect of their own identity, finding that it 'complements' the part of them that was otherwise a scientist and mathematician (Marcus).

Disconnection

Despite the evident ability to connect to a painting or an art gallery it is also possible to identify examples of disconnection, and thus disengagement. This is where a visitor's personal, experiential and factual knowledge is challenged or contradicted, perhaps through the incomprehensibility of subject matter or the confusion induced by a particular style of painting. In this research study there were evident examples of disconnection based on cultural background that emerged from the experiential narratives. These cultural disparities can create a disengaged experience through disenchantment (Weber, 2001) or an engaged one through inspiring further exploration:

It was interesting to find representations of London, the history of London and England. I don't really know that much about it, I'm not from here. So that was a little bit confusing sometimes, especially when I'd see the sculptures of monarchs.

Edith

And downstairs feeling that this historical building and this kind of paintings are about something maybe I don't know much. I didn't feel... comfortable there.

Pippa

All experiences of engaging with art galleries and paintings are based on the subjective and the personal. Our understanding of this process is benefitted by developing knowledge of the connections made and the stimuli for these connections. Paintings are able to open the doors to affective, emotive and embodied experiences based on the subjectivity of the visitor through the process of engagement of the embodied eye with the inter/active image. In turn this could provide the mechanism for promoting positive mental health and well-being in the visitor.

... one of my personal interests always I think is when I go to some place I look for things that make a click in my head. I'm kind of obsessed with that trajectory, to where the painting takes you. Just one painting, why one painting strikes you almost, and why it takes you in this certain way. Sometimes I find it's because of what I like. But sometimes it's not like that, it's just on personal circumstance at the moment. It always relates with you though.

Faye

The Acquisition of Knowledge

I like finding out things that you don't know about places that kind of change how you understand what you're looking at in London.

Flora

The acquisition of knowledge emerged from data analysis to form part of the resulting thematic framework. I will not overly elaborate on the art gallery as a resource for formal learning but will highlight some examples of how it presented itself as an aspect of the participants' visit to the Guildhall Art Gallery to contextualise knowledge acquisition within my research study.

As well as visual and experiential knowledge, the predominant acquisition of knowledge associated with the art gallery visitor experience is factual. This is cultivated through the interpretive resources provided by the art gallery, which provided information for the participants that they had not previously known. The analysis of experiential narratives uncovered an interest in the literary connections found in paintings and the discovery of intended narratives embedded within the artwork. A cultural and historical interest of London and its development, including the architectural progression, also materialised. There was an additional demonstration of focused interest in acquiring knowledge about the technical process of producing and conserving paintings, based on the 'varnish test' on display in the gallery. This provided 'interesting' insight, for Fiona in particular.

Whilst the acquisition of knowledge from the visit to an art gallery is an experiential encounter in itself, it can also inspire further exploration to acquire a deeper level of factual information. Some of the participants referred to taking photos and making notes to inform subsequent investigation of areas that piqued their interest:

... sometimes I take notes to go and do some research... And I'll try to do some research about Matthew Smith and see more. Because the portraits impress me... remind me of Matisse, Expressionism and I really like it, these kinds of paintings. But I don't know if the rest of his work is going to be like that and I will like it.

Pippa

In conclusion, the acquisition of art historical and other factual knowledge is a motivation and an outcome of the visitor experience of art galleries. It is therefore conducive to potential mental health and well-being through fulfilling an agenda or providing revelation in the form of new information. Whilst this goes beyond the initially affective, visceral and emotionally engaged experience, it demonstrates an example of visitors' desire for layered experience and interpretation, as well as a *totality* of experience (Armstrong, 2005) (p. 100). The affective, visceral and emotional provides an initial route to engagement that can also be enhanced, developed or altered through interpretation, at the visitor's discretion.

A Sense of History

A compelling manifestation of participant engagement was the profusion of accounts based on a perceived 'sense of history' from the visit to the art gallery and the engagement with paintings. Each one of the participants made at least some reference to an affective encounter or engaged aspect of their visit that was based on historical information or intrigue. The sense of history seems to be an existential contextualisation of humanity through time, with the participants finding an interest in seeing 'through many pieces of art some moments of history or London' (Melinda). The sense of history is also conceived as a romanticised, nostalgic form of escapism, hence elevating the role of the art gallery as an

environment conducive to positive mental health and well-being through direct remedial benefit from engagement with paintings:

... this kind of representations of Greece, like that kind of style of life. Especially at the moment, I am like freaking out with my life and all this stuff, and I see these paintings and it's like taking me to another space where people used to enjoy the pass of time. We are so pressed for that so it makes me remember how I can compare with that kind of life. Or what they were wanting at that time, 'cause it was like a nostalgic again feeling of the past, so how we can feel about that now, you know... I really liked it. And I really like also the comparison between this kind of evasion and the real life. And like how they were picturing themselves at that time.

Faye

(e.g. Figure 26, Appendix 1, p. 317)

There is reference in the participants' experiential narratives to the sense of historic development of the production of paintings and artistic movements – also related to 'cultural contextualisation'. All these embodied and perceived examples of a sense of history, combined strongly with the thematic device of 'cultural and geographic contextualisation', embed the visitor within the socio-cultural and historical world in which they live, adhering to a 'historically and aesthetically effected consciousness' whilst providing existential gravitas.

Cultural and Geographic Contextualisation

Visitors to an art gallery are naturally disposed to contextualise their visit within the wider realm of their own experience and knowledge in pursuit of meaning-making. The aspects of the visit that are most prolifically contextualised are those of culture and geography (as well as a sense of history, as above) due to the inherent nature of these cultural organisations. This might be the contextualisation of a particular geographic region; the stylistic implementation of an artistic movement; or the wider cultural contextualisation of the art gallery and its collections in relation to the external production and appreciation of a socio-cultural world. Cultural and geographic contextualisation is also related to the

personal connection and disconnection in terms of identity but is here defined as externally contextualised.

The participants in this research study provided various examples of cultural and geographic contextualisation, particularly the cultivation of the historic identity of London due to the collection of related paintings at the Guildhall Art Gallery, which has been accounted for in the thematic device of a 'sense of history' (p. 228-229). There were also references made to literature and film in direct relation to the content of paintings, providing implicit associations provoked through engagement. These were supplemented with examples of the contextualisation of paintings in relation to the wider field of artistic practice:

And then I compared it in my mind to a Turner... is it Temeraire, where there's a modern ship towing an older ship or something, and so there's a kind of parallel there in the way that it represented it, and that was something that I did at school, that painting.

Fiona³⁴

As many of the participants in the research survey came from international backgrounds they had not been permanent residents of the United Kingdom, and particularly London. Therefore, the cultural and geographical contextualisation provided by many of the paintings at the Guildhall Art Gallery gave an insight into a country and city of which the participants were expanding their general knowledge. Through connective contextualisation the art gallery could potentially embrace or ostracise the visitor, depending on the capacity for engagement provided by the triadic combination of viewer, object and gallery, as well as circumstance. The embracing of the visitor would produce a positive sense of mental health and well-being, whilst an ostracisation would preclude this from happening.

³⁴ It is thought that this participant was referring to *Commerce and Sea Power* (1898) by William Lionel Wyllie. With lack of further definitive information the painting has not been included further in this thesis, other than as this demonstration of an example of 'cultural contextualisation'.

Revelation

Revelation can be associated with a spiritual, numinous or 'transcendental' encounter, the catalyst for which was originally considered external to the physical and psychological body (Otto, 1950). Despite its religious connotations and origins, in a more general sense revelation is also a moment of surprise, inspiration or intense emotion or comprehension caused by the phenomenological mechanism of heightened experientialism.

Though there is little literature or evident research on the revelatory in art galleries and museums it is still a significant aspect of the visitor experience. It is associated with the sublime through the intense emotive symptomatic manifestation it provokes, yet the revelatory is more grounded in the conscious realisation of a change that has transpired and can more readily be identified. This might be through the acquisition of knowledge, discovering something new and unexpected, or having an unpredictable affective or emotive encounter that takes the visitor by surprise. The revelatory could also be a spiritual encounter where the visitor feels an evocative, affective and emotive influence perceived as being externally located and causing physiological or psychological impact. This echoes with the resonance of Carol Duncan (1995) and Alain de Botton's (2011, 2013) perception of the museum as the new secular cathedral. Although there are those in the field of museum visitor research who allude to spiritual experience of cultural organisations and collections (Falk 2011; Latham, 2007, 2009; Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2005, 2009, 2011), there seems to be little emphasis on research into revelation, numinosity and spirituality when directly engaging with paintings, beyond initial recognition or theoretical speculation.

There were no evident examples of the intense revelatory experience as emphasised above in the experiential narratives of the participants in this research study but these can be substantiated through other literary sources (Elkins, 2004; Tam, 2006; de Menil, 2010). In this study the revelation took the form of surprise and making unexpected discoveries:

It took me to a place in London that I've never been before and that makes it very worthy. I like going to places I haven't been before.

William

I would say the first thing was walking into the courtyard because I didn't really know where I was going anyway, but then to kind of fall into this amazing part of London is quite an experience

Sally

The concept of revelatory experience in the art gallery can be in direct correlation to the curiosity and exploratory nature of the visitor. These are the visitors who seek out revelation through the implementation of 'optimal foraging theory' (Rounds, 2004), rather than it occurring organically as part of the visiting experience. Whether the revelatory is a satisfaction of exploratory curiosity or an unexpected encounter, it is an aspect that would encourage visitor fulfilment and provide memorability. In summary, the revelatory, spiritual and sublime can be contributory factors to both temporal and accumulative mental health and well-being, provided the outcomes are of an affirmative disposition.

COLLECTIVE EXPERIENTIAL NARRATIVES ON PAINTINGS

The phenomenological and active dialogue between visitor and painting in the art gallery is a subjective process, based on the specificity and variables of both the external context and internal perception. As part of the analysis for the ethnographic research study I used a creative interpretive process to produce 'collective experiential narratives'. These collective narratives were created by combining all of the participants' individual subjective experiential narratives for each painting with my own auto-ethnographic stance. This made it possible to provide an overarching insight into engagement with each painting, making use of direct quotes from the participant narratives. From this I could determine the impact of paintings with particular emphasis on their affective and emotive qualities within the thematic framework for analysis.

Below is a tabulated presentation of all of the collective experiential narratives of paintings mentioned by the participants in the ethnographic research study at Guildhall Art Gallery (pp. 234-244). Each painting is accompanied by relevant themes from the analytical framework and examples of affective and engaged outcomes, either directly from the vocabulary used or as interpreted in the process of analysis. Factual information about the paintings has not been included unless specifically and relevantly mentioned by the participants in relation to their experience of the painting. Any reference to interpretive resources provided in the art gallery have not been included to retain the focus on the affective engaged experience.

Table of Collective Experiential Narratives

The collective narratives are presented here in the order they were first mentioned in the ethnographic research study at the Guildhall Art Gallery. The images used on these pages are for reference; the main illustrations can be found in the corresponding appendix. This element of the research process demonstrates how an interpretive accumulation of evaluative data could be used to identify examples of engagement and the language used for the affective and emotive experience. From this it is possible to better understand the elements that could contribute to the role of the art gallery and paintings as a resource for promoting positive mental health and emotional well-being.

Image	Narrative	Thematic Analysis
 <p>Les Trois Princesses (The Three Princesses) 1881 Edward Matthew Hale (Figure 23, Appendix 1, p. 316)</p>	<p><i>This painting is ‘quite intriguing’ (Robert). The compositional layout, positioning and background all provide a sense of a ‘story behind this painting, that which I’m really interested to know’ (Robert). As I focus on the cluster of figures dominating the left half of the canvas I am intrigued to know the secret of which they whisper, and desire to step into the canvas to become part of the story, part of the adventure. The detail, facial expressions and soft light creates a dynamism in this painting that provides a sensory impression of sitting in the grass, waiting for the horseman to arrive with his impending influence.</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; humanistic empathy</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: interesting; intriguing; sense perception</p>
 <p>La Ghirlandata 1873 Dante Gabriel Rossetti (Figure 12, Appendix 1, p. 313)</p>	<p><i>To ‘discover’ the Rossetti painting in the collection was ‘amazing’ (Pippa), providing me with a comforting sense of familiarity having been to the Pre-Raphaelite exhibition. I had some previous knowledge together with the feeling that I can make some connections. I felt...motivated to explore more’ (Anna). There is an evocative ‘sense of play’ (Robert) in the painting based on the narrative supplied by the real life dynamic between the artist, sitter for the portrait, and her husband, William Morris – with Rossetti being in love with the sitter. The symbolism and iconographical reference, especially the ‘flowers next to her face’ (Edith), indicate an affinity with William Morris and his design patterns, providing a complex and captivating narrative.</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; knowledge acquisition; memory; humanistic empathy; revelation</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: amazement; captivating; comfort; connection; discovery; engagement; evocative; exploration; familiarity; intriguing; motivation; playful;</p>



 <p>John Philip Kemble, as Coriolanus 1798 Thomas Lawrence</p> <p>(Figure 24, Appendix 1, p. 316)</p>	<p><i>The imposing stature of the figure in this painting, emphasised by the scale and use of chiaroscuro, creates a sense of drama and arresting gravitas. With the darkness illuminated by the soft glow of the fire the figure seems to be 'emerging from this darkness' (Robert), as if he could at any moment step down from the painting into the space of the art gallery.</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; impact of scale</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: arresting; drama; imposing;</p>
 <p>George Dance's Design for the New London Bridge, London 1802 William Daniell</p> <p>(Figure 14, Appendix 1, p. 313)</p>	<p><i>This painting provides a fascinating insight into the history of London, especially as the bridge featured was actually never made. 'It's interesting to think what could've been, what London could've been like, because it would have changed London - and that's alternate reality' (William).</i></p>	<p>Themes: personal connection; knowledge acquisition; sense of history; cultural and geographical contextualisation; revelation</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: fascination; interesting</p>
 <p>Listed 1886 William Henry Gore</p> <p>(Figure 1, Appendix 1, p. 309)</p>	<p><i>The subtle effervescent light diffuses throughout the painting, providing a soft glow to frame and illuminate the embracing couple. There is a sense of naturalism within the painting 'because of the light and the way it reflects the light' (Anna). Through the pose and body language it is possible to identify a palpable connection and love between the two figures, 'comforting each other' (Sally) because of the famine and impending involvement in war. The painting stands out in my mind because I feel able to empathise with the affectionate emotion for another as 'I got married this year', so I think it's something personal, something I knew before' (Anna).</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; memory; humanistic empathy; personal connection; knowledge acquisition; naturalistic phenomena</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: empathy; realism</p>

 <p><i>Pleading</i> 1876 Lawrence Alma-Tadema (Figure 25, Appendix 1, p. 317)</p>	<p><i>The soft colours provide a sense of calm and enjoyment as I view this painting. The compositional positioning of the figures, the facial expressions and the abandoned flowers displaced across the girl's lap concurrently imply a tension and an impending relationship through dedicated courtship. As the paintings on the other side of the room were much darker, this provided an impression of light and made the visual experience 'a bit more vibrant' (Sally).</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; humanistic empathy.</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: calm; enjoyment; vibrancy</p>
 <p><i>The Betrothed</i> 1892 John William Godward (Figure 26, Appendix 1, p. 317)</p>	<p><i>The girl seems to be lost in a sense of reverie as she contemplates the ring on her finger, elated through love. The colours and textures within the painting, including the 'beautiful painted marble and the leopard skin' (Marcus), create a sensorial impression of being in the scene. The affect induces a welcome sense of calm, especially in the face of a hectic life. This painting takes me 'to another space where people used to enjoy the pass of time', producing 'a nostalgic feeling of the past' (Faye).</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; memory; humanistic empathy; personal connection; sense of history.</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: calm; escapism; nostalgia; sense perception</p>
 <p><i>Too Early</i> 1873 James Tissot (Figure 27, Appendix 1, p. 317)</p>	<p><i>Almost as if standing in the corner of the ballroom, watching as people arrive, this painting provides a visual tapestry of a time gone by. You can 'see who was gossiping about who, or who was flirting with who', almost adopting the role of a 'voyeur' (Sally) or flâneur/flâneuse. The painting is 'just wonderfully painted, beautifully painted and also the use of space in the painting - there being far too much of it in a sense... People have arrived fairly early for a ball... and the space catches that, and the odd way that the two in the doorway are standing, which must be an unusual way for Victorians to stand at the time' (Marcus). Compositionally there is a frozen perpetuation of those 'in between moments', when the image is not perfectly staged or cultivated. The gestures emphasise this intriguing sense of natural social dynamism, punctuated by the pulsating use of black. However, the most intriguing aspect of all is the violin player's eyes, which are 'whited out' (Edith).</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; humanistic empathy; sense of history; revelation.</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: social and empathetic intrigue</p>



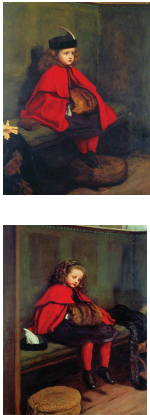
 <p>Sun and Moon Flowers 1889 George Dunlop Leslie</p> <p>(Figure 28, Appendix 1, p. 317)</p>	<p><i>The yellow glow within this painting delicately mirrors the brighter colour of the sunflowers, producing a relaxing ambience. The image is 'peaceful' (Sally), making it feel 'like I had the sun in front of me' (Anna). As the two girls while away the time preparing flowers, it reminds one of a leisurely sense of domestic docility.</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; memory (sense perception); naturalistic phenomena</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: peaceful; relaxing; sense perception</p>
 <p>The Palace of Westminster, London 1892 George Vicat Cole</p> <p>(Figure 29, Appendix 1, p. 318)</p>	<p><i>The atmospheric haze engulfing Westminster evokes a recollection of 'when I've been to a Turner exhibition' (Sally). The synchronistic allegiance between the naturalistic ambience and the built environment places humankind within the wider, greater world.</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; memory; cultural/geographic contextualisation; naturalistic phenomena</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: (cultural) connection; sublime</p>
 <p>Henry VIII and the Barber Surgeons c. 1543 Hans Holbein the Younger (Additions and re-workings mid-16th and 17th centuries)</p> <p>(Figure 30, Appendix 1, p. 318)</p>	<p><i>Having a visual impression of Henry VIII from seeing previous images, it was interesting to see a painting with a recognisable figure in it. The specificity of the details, such as the King's hand gestures and where 'the carpet was crinkled' (Edith) provides a humanistic presence. You could imagine Henry VIII himself walking across the rug to take the position where he will be artistically immortalised.</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; memory; sense of history; cultural and geographic contextualisation.</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: humanistic connection; recognition</p>

 <p>Queen Victoria Enthroned in the House of Lords 1838 George Hayter</p> <p>(Figure 31, Appendix 1, p. 318)</p>	<p><i>The tangible, materialistic texture in this painting produces a sensory dimensionalisation. The attention to detail and the jewels in Queen Victoria's crown are appealing for visually 'aesthetic reasons' (Edith).</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: sense perception; visual enjoyment</p>
 <p>Defeat of the Floating Batteries at Gibraltar, September 1782 (The Siege of Gibraltar) 1783 – 1791 John Singleton Copley</p> <p>(Figure 18, Appendix 1, p. 314)</p>	<p><i>This painting captures a historic moment on a very large scale, so you are completely consumed by the overtly forceful action. Caught somewhere between the composed army on the right and the destruction on the left, the viewer is a dislocated observer safely situated on the other side of the picture plane.</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; impact of scale; sense of history</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: Consumed (immersive)</p>
 <p>Patricia Neal 1954 Matthew Arnold Bracy Smith</p> <p>(Figure 32, Appendix 1, p. 319)</p>	<p><i>This painting produces an interesting visual perspective as the woman is painted 'from such a strange angle', as if it's 'from up above' (Edith). This gives a natural intimacy to the painting through the angle and the proximity to the figure, emphasised by the cropped composition.</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; humanistic empathy</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: humanistic connection; intimacy</p>

 <p>Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee Service, 22 June 1897 1897 – 1899 Andrew Carrick Gow</p> <p>(Figure 9, Appendix 1, p. 312)</p>	<p><i>Looking into this painting from a slightly elevated position, I can hear the cheering, the excitement and bustling atmosphere. The dense staccato of figures positioned side by side signifies the importance and grandeur of the occasion.</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; sense of history; cultural and geographic contextualisation</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: impressive; sense perception</p>
 <p>The Ninth of November 1888 1890 William Logsdail</p> <p>(Figure 15, Appendix 1, p. 314)</p>	<p><i>The poses, the activity, the action – each figure a characterful example of the tableau of humanity in London. On the same level as the hoards of people I feel like I am part of the crowd, catching the eye of the uniformed gentleman as he walks my way. Having gone to the 'Lord Mayor's Show quite a lot as a kid and then I went again recently last year' provides a historicised comparison of how things were then and how they are now. The ceremonies of the past still existing in the changing world.</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; memory; humanistic empathy; personal connection; knowledge acquisition; sense of history; cultural and geographic contextualisation</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: human connection; sense perception</p>
 <p>Clytemnestra 1882 John Collier</p> <p>(Figure 33, Appendix 1, p. 319)</p>	<p><i>There is a dramatic sense of theatrically in this painting, as Clytemnestra looks down on me with those fierce, penetrating eyes. 'I felt that she was standing there and looking at us, and it was very obvious that she committed a crime' (Anna). The sense of depth and perspective reveals the room where this crime happened, whilst the eye is drawn to the vividly red blood dripping down the axe and the step, onto the ground below.</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: dramatic; scary; visual connection</p>

 <p><i>The Blessed Damozel</i> 1895 John Byam Liston Shaw</p> <p>(Figure 34, Appendix 1, p. 320)</p>	<p><i>Whilst this painting is visually engaging with its colourful vibrancy and compositionally diverse array of poses, it was the poem that is most intriguing. This visual and semantical juxtaposition provides a greater depth of perception and narrative contextualisation to the painting, inciting me to learn more about it.</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; knowledge acquisition; revelatory</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: intriguing; vibrancy</p>
 <p><i>Study for 'The Eve of St Agnes'</i> c. 1847 – 1848 William Holman Hunt</p> <p>(Figure 35, Appendix 1, p. 320)</p>	<p><i>As a study there is a haziness to this image that makes the shapes within it amorphous. It is possible to make out the slumped and sprawling figures, as well as the dog. This emphasises the impression of night and tired inebriation, whilst the architecturally framed arches of light provide visibility to peruse the image.</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: intrigue; visual enjoyment</p>
 <p><i>Ariadne in Naxos</i> 1875 George Frederic Watts</p> <p>(Figure 36, Appendix 1, page 320)</p>	<p><i>The figure of the white clad female sprawling diagonally across the canvas, with her crouching companion behind her, compositionally seem to mirror the two leopards and the sweeping shore line. The soft, diffuse colours provide a comfortable visual experience for the eye.</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; personal connection</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: visual enjoyment</p>

 <p><i>Married for Love</i> 1882 Marcus Stone (Figure 37, Appendix 1, p. 321)</p>	<p><i>There is a purposive sense of space across the length of this painting, as the stairs lead the eye from the couple towards the other figure. The young man holds onto his lady's arm in a protective yet assertive way as he leads her in the direction of the other gentleman, creating sense of an impending union. There is also 'a depth and it's not flat' (Anna). The dynamic between the couple and the baby encapsulates a timeless relationship – it's something that 'happens through the years' with other couples (Anna).</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; humanistic empathy; personal connection; sense of history</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: emotionally humanistic connection</p>
 <p><i>A Pythagorean School Invaded by Sybarites</i> 1887 Michele Tedesco (Figure 38, Appendix 1, p. 321)</p>	<p><i>The huge scale of this painting transcends the visual field whilst immersing the viewer in the chaotic scene. The painting provides an insight to the Ancient world through creative execution.</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; impact of scale; sense of history; cultural and geographic contextualisation</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: immersive; impressive; insightful</p>
 <p><i>The Last Evening</i> 1873 James Tissot Oil on canvas, 72 x 103 cm (Figure 17, Appendix 1, p. 314)</p>	<p><i>There is an ambiguous impression of narrative in this painting, the eve before a ship sets sail. The colour, content and multi-linear composition provide an abundance of stimuli to keep the eye and the imagination actively engaged.</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; humanistic empathy</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: engagement; imagination; visual enjoyment</p>
 <p><i>Israel in Egypt</i> 1867 Sir Edward J. Poynter (Figure 8, Appendix 1, p. 312)</p>	<p><i>This 'lurid' (Fiona) scene is a horizontally expansive narrative, the width of the painting emphasising the length and directive movement of the procession. The abundant and attentive detail keeps the eye entertained as it moves through the chaotic and active crowd.</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; impact of scale; sense of history; cultural and geographic contextualisation</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: lurid; narrative engagement; visual enjoyment</p>

 <p>Demolition of Old London Bridge c. 19th century J.W.S.</p> <p>(Figure 16, Appendix 1, p. 314)</p>	<p><i>As the labourers toil away to demolish the bridge, with the 'ruins of the bridge' in the background, it 'makes me think that must have been really dangerous' (Fiona). There is also a lucid impression of historic London and the events that made it architecturally the city it is today.</i></p>	<p>Themes: humanistic empathy; knowledge acquisition; sense of history; cultural and geographic contextualisation</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: human and cultural connection; lucid</p>
 <p>The Thames during the Great Frost of 1739 1739 Jan Griffier II</p> <p>(Figure 39, Appendix 1, p. 321)</p>	<p><i>What a wonderfully extraordinary scene, seeing the frozen Thames peopled with the city dwellers of the 18th century. The undulating landscape of people, tents and buildings generates polycentric visual fixations, as you are enticed to pick out details and learn more about London.</i></p>	<p>Themes: humanistic empathy; knowledge acquisition; sense of history; cultural and geographic contextualisation</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: enticing; human and cultural connection; wonderful</p>
 <p>My First Sermon, 1863 My Second Sermon, 1864 John Everett Millais</p> <p>(Figures 40 and 41, Appendix 1, pp. 321-322)</p>	<p><i>These naturalistic small portraits, captivating through the use of rich red, are a simplistic yet evocative portrayal of childhood. The specificity of the little girl becomes a symbolic demonstration of youth. The painting is also a representation of the past. 'You can imagine the time, the interest [the artist] had to represent that certain time – the dresses, the fashion. It's not only a model, it's his daughter. A domestic kind of scene, real life' (Faye) with 'a lot of real work observation in them' (Marcus).</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; humanistic empathy; sense of history</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: captivating; evocative; visual enjoyment</p>

 <p><i>The Sleeping Couple</i> c. 1658 – 1660 Jan Steen</p> <p>(Figure 42, Appendix 1, p. 322)</p>	<p><i>This small painting is ‘very nicely painted’ and ‘composed’ (Marcus). The naturalistic poses and the debris casually strewn across the table imply an indulgent and inebriated slumber.</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; humanistic empathy</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: ‘nice’; visual enjoyment</p>
 <p><i>The Music Lesson</i> 1877 Frederic Leighton</p> <p>(Figure 19, Appendix 1, p. 315)</p>	<p><i>This painting provides a ‘very soft dynamic’ (Pippa), with the subdued colours and rich draping material of the dresses sweeping down the canvas. The close relationship between the two figures echoes of a maternalistic bond as the older girl teaches the younger girl. The perspective also feels like you are standing on the ground surveying these two figures on the stage as the eye is drawn into the scene.</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; humanistic empathy</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: calm; human connection; sense perception; visual enjoyment;</p>
 <p><i>The Reading of the Bible by the Rabbis (A Souvenir of Morocco)</i> 1882 Jean Jules Antoine Lecomte du Noüy</p> <p>(Figure 43, Appendix 1, p. 322)</p>	<p><i>This quiet scene of immersed contemplation, illuminated by a shining light in the dusky interior, provides cultural and religious insight for the viewer. As you step towards the painting it is almost as if you are intruding on a significant moment.</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; cultural and geographic contextualisation</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: Insightful; quiet;</p>

 <p><i>The Pyrrhic Dance</i> 1869 Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema</p> <p>(Figure 44, Appendix 1, p. 322)</p>	<p><i>'It's a tremendous painting... in terms of the composition and the arrangement of the main figures' (Marcus). The parallel pose of the two figures to the left of the painting insinuates rhythmic movement, as the onlookers regard the spectacle. The Ancient clothes and interior recreate a scene of the past as one imagines the cultural practices of Antiquity.</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; knowledge acquisition; sense of history; cultural and geographic contextualisation</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: dynamism; human and cultural insight; spectacle; tremendous; visual enjoyment</p>
 <p><i>The Thames by Moonlight with Southwark Bridge, London</i> 1884 John Atkinson Grimshaw</p> <p>(Figure 22, Appendix 1, p. 316)</p>	<p><i>This moonscape of the city visually reconciles the urban and the natural, with the clouds, moonlight, water and boats being 'just phenomenal' (Marcus). The grey tonal homogeneity cloaks the viewer in the darkness of night-time as the lustrous moon attempts to break through the sky. I could imagine wandering the city at a time when I would usually be in slumber.</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; naturalistic phenomena</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: human connection; imagination; phenomenal; sublime</p>
 <p><i>The Banquet Scene in Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'</i> 1840 Daniel Maclise</p> <p>(Figure 45, Appendix 1, p. 323)</p>	<p><i>This painting is an evocative visualisation of the Shakespearean tragedy, imaginatively capturing a key moment. There is also a 'good use of space because of all the positioning of everybody' (Marcus), with the key players in the central foreground and the banquet guests dispersed throughout the rest of the scene. The dark colours allude to both a Middle Ages interior and the tragic drama integral to the play.</i></p>	<p>Themes: artistic execution; sense of history; cultural and geographic contextualisation</p> <p>Affective and Engaged Outcomes: evocative; visual enjoyment</p>

VISITOR MOTIVATIONS

The ethnographic research study provided an opportunity to investigate the motivations for visitors to art galleries. Through the collection of experiential narratives from the interview process it was possible to determine a general framework for the motivations of visitors to art galleries, with specific overarching reasons emerging from the data.

Planned Visit

Participants demonstrated the intentional visit to art galleries, often for the purpose of attending a specific exhibition:

I don't go very often... I might very rarely go to see a specific exhibition.

William

This is an art gallery where I would wait until there's a certain exhibition I wanted to go to before I came back. So, it's obviously not in the – it can't be, can it – in the National Gallery, Louvre, you know, type category.

Marcus

Social Activity

Despite the focus of the study on the individual visitor, some participants mentioned their preference for going to an art gallery as a social activity:

I'll go and visit with someone and so it's a kind of social thing.

Fiona

I have on occasion gone with a lady friend... not necessarily to impress her but more over lack of imagination of what else to do.

William

Obligation or Convention

One visitor motivation amongst some of the participants was due to an implicit sense of obligation or socio-cultural convention. This implies the external influences on human behaviour created by a perceived notion of the performative construction of our active identities. It is the force of a sense of duty that predominantly motivates in this instance, whilst there might be other venerable motivations embedded within this, such as self-development:

I suppose a lot of it does sometimes have to do with that you should go. Because, you know, one feels as though it could further your experiences, or your knowledge.

Sally

This reason for visiting the art gallery relates to the Bourdieuan concept of validating and expanding cultural capital that my research was dismissing. However, it is clearly still a prevalent motivation, arguably also sustaining the Bourdieuan doctrine of social convention. The concept of obligation is associated with Falk and Dierking's (2012) 'Respectful Pilgrims', who visit to pay respects at a museum '*because they possess a sense of duty or obligation*' (Falk and Dierking, 2012: 62). The respectful pilgrim visitor type is associated mostly with ethnographic and memorial museums but the integral components of 'duty' and 'obligation' are comparable to the more general motivation of some visitors, who feel they are fulfilling a convention by visiting cultural organisations.

Functional Purpose

Some visitors (participants) make unplanned visits to art galleries due to specific circumstance and for functional, logistical purposes – as also represented in the On-site Survey (p. 179):

I might once in a few years get stuck in a gallery because it's raining outside and it offers shelter from the storm.

William

These functional motivations might also include ‘passing the time’ if there is an art gallery in close proximity. Functional visits can be as affective or as valuable as planned visits to an art gallery and potentially more likely to be imbued with latent revelatory possibility.

Personal connection

A very strong motivational catalyst is personal connection, including taste and experiential memory inducing subsequent visits:

I always went to art galleries from a very early stage, and museums... I can't remember much – but certainly by the time I was sort of 13, 14, 15 – regularly going on my own.

Marcus

Well actually, I have a relationship with art galleries. When I was in school, I have to give examinations for university and it was a very stressful period. And we were with some friends and every Friday we used to have a visit in a gallery. And it was like a habit just to forget everything and all the stress that we had and to move in another world. And it became a habit, and we did that every Friday for 3 years that we were have the exams because it was really difficult. And I think that's how it begins... it begins from social group and then it became something I liked doing alone because I was more concentrated alone. So often when I travelled in other countries I prefer to go alone just to concentrate. And usually when I go with my friends somewhere I re-visit the place.

Anna

Acquisition of knowledge

As has been demonstrated through the corresponding thematic device from the analytical framework, people visit art galleries for the acquisition of knowledge, both experiential and factual.

Recreational and Inspirational

For those who have an enjoyment of art galleries, the motivation to visit might be for recreational purposes and can be seen as a ‘luxury’ outside the parameters of

work and other obligations. Whilst not always an interrelated motivation or outcome, the art gallery also adopts the role of providing inspiration in visitors through affective engagement. The combination of recreation and inspiration was particular potent for one participant:

Mostly on the weekends I just go to have something to do... one gallery I used to go to quite frequently... and I remember that I used to just go and sit in the photography gallery and write letters to people, or just take notes and just think. Or just write in a journal for a bit. So, yeah, it was just like a really nice place to go and be in and just kind of look at the work... Or if I'm just feeling like I'm just kind of stuck with something, and generally find that I've always gone to a museum or a gallery to just stare at the work for a bit and for some reason just be able to do that kind of gets my mind working again and I can start to just solve other problems that I have going on.

Edith

Professional Purpose

Although this research is not investigating the role of the art gallery in the mental health and well-being of professionals working within these organisations, inevitably those who visit art galleries might also have a professional position there. Even for those working in art galleries the experience could produce affective and remedial outcomes, particularly through 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson, 1990). The professional motivation of visitors was also demonstrated through the experiential narratives of participants:

I go to galleries actually because I'm a museum educator.

Faye

I study Art History... It's my job. When I go out from my country I usually try to go to a number of galleries.

Melinda

Cultural and Experiential Capital

Visitors also go to art galleries for the purpose of consolidating and developing their cultural knowledge and appreciation. This motivation, as for those who do not necessarily consciously acknowledge it as a motivation, are expanding their 'cultural capital', helping in self-development and as an asset for social interaction, beyond the limited sociological Bourdieuan perspective:

It's very rare that I go to any art gallery and emerge disappointed. So I am somebody who just thinks, you know, one is unbelievably fortunate... I work in London – one of the greatest cultural capitals in the world... I travel quite a lot – when I do travel I nearly always manage to get to one museum or art gallery or building, or something cultural.

Marcus

Collective Motivations

The individual motivations as defined here do not necessarily happen in isolation; they have been presented in a concise and divided way for the purpose of coherent description and effectual comprehension. Visitors are able to perceive the collectivity and innate entwining of their motivations:

Why I go to galleries? I go to galleries actually because I'm a museum educator, but I don't have time to go to art galleries. At the moment I really am struggling to find time to do that. So, if I have to prioritise what is the main thing why I come to galleries, is because study, and you know, I always try to do both things – like take something productive from my work and also enjoying it. What I always find is like the second part is coming before the first. I go to the gallery because I have to see something and suddenly I get lost... it takes me through that journey that I told you, and... it's kind of between leisure, in the sense that I enjoy culture and arts, and the need to take something from that experience. Because it's not the same as going to other places – this is the thing I like the most. Because I think that it's a meaningful thing, to me... I just do it because I think it's much more rewarding, after I go from here I feel fulfilled, instead of going to other places.

Faye

Logistical Implications and Potential Barriers

As well as the directive motivations of visiting art galleries there is the presence of logistical implications impacting motivation, as well as potential barriers to visiting art galleries through inaccessibility:

... the most important thing I mean for this kind of time to enjoy paintings in a gallery is if it's convenient, it's not a long travel, if you have to commute for long... Sometimes that happened to me at Tate Modern... The travel is long that at the time you arrive to the gallery you are tired... If you have the chance to go and come back few times that's more enjoyable. But if it's just a visit to the city sometimes you feel very tired.

Pippa

Summary

Many of these motivations contribute to affectivity, which can be seen through symptomatic responses such as relaxation, liminality and remedial benefits that might inspire subsequent motivation to continue visiting art galleries. This premise is a fundamental component and outcome of this research – demonstrating how the art gallery becomes a resource as part of our wider experiential existence for promoting accumulative positive mental health and well-being. Motivation to visit art galleries will of course not be applicable to everyone, as not everyone engages with art galleries in the same way or with the same potency. As my research is based on those who already visit art galleries this is an important testimony to the topical investigation of this research.

THE SPECIFICITY OF ART GALLERIES

I like the peacefulness and the incongruity, in a way, between the gallery and the world, the City of London, around it.

Marcus

As one specific art gallery was chosen for this research study there is a specificity that prevails. Whilst the overarching thematic elements from studying this specific gallery can be applicable to other cultural organisations, it is the unique combination of art gallery, collection, audience, as well as an array of other variable and invariable factors, that preclude replication. Consequently I asked participants how this visit compared to other visits, for the purpose of identifying specificity and for also extracting common themes across visitor experience. The outcome was that the participants' declarations naturally allocated themselves to the devices from the thematic framework for analysis, and many quotes from the experiential narratives have been included in previous sections of this thesis. Therefore, I will summarise the overriding idiosyncrasies that emerged about the Guildhall Art Gallery.

Firstly, the most evident comparative aspect that differed to many other art galleries was the quiet, uncrowded environment. This was perceived in the majority of cases as a positive aspect of the visit, though of course from the perspective of an art gallery there is a balance between creating a comfortable, immersive and enjoyable atmosphere and developing audiences. There were other comments made about the environment of the gallery, both tangible and intangible. The sense of the comparative smallness of the gallery and its collections – as well as the civic, historic architecture – were highlighted for the evidential prominence as part of the specificity of this visitor experience. Many participants were impacted positively by the small scale as this was found to be conducive to a manageable experience and averted museum fatigue.

The natural light created through the windows, and particularly that refracted through the stained glass windows, was mentioned by some of the participants as a defining aspect of the visit. Whilst this is a person-subjective aspect, it is significant that some of the participants found the layout of the gallery, and therefore orientation, confusing. I believe this has two possible contributing factors. Firstly, as the Guildhall Art Gallery is a civic building used for meetings, events and ceremonies there are many doorways that lead off to enclaves inaccessible to the public – disorientating the visitor. Even though these doorways

are closed to psychologically deny perceived accessibility so are the other doors visitors are able to go through (such as to the London Galleries and the amphitheatre), hence potentially creating a subliminal disjunction. Inaccessible doorways are present in many art galleries but it is the combination of this factor with the second potential contributory factor to disorientation that emphasises the first. The second factor is that the number of visitors in the art gallery compared to larger and more renowned galleries has an impact on orientation as there is often not an obvious contingent to follow – visitors are often navigating the space through self-orientation and not in respect of other visitors. This was enhanced by the perception of the small, winding corridors mentioned by some participants.

Another overtly evident comparison was the collections at the Guildhall Art Gallery. Due to the collection being part of the City of London Corporation, many of the works were related to London and its history. This was commented on by many of the participants as the London Galleries gave an insight into the City that would not be as evident at other cultural organisations. Participants were also surprised by the perceived significance of the artworks in the collection as they were not familiar with the gallery and had an implied expectation that the collections might not be of such a 'high standard'.

The majority of the examples of the specificity of the Guildhall Art Gallery and comparability with other art galleries were based on personal connection and taste. Many of the participants had a preference for Contemporary art but this did not completely hinder the affectivity or enjoyment of their visit. If anything the contrary nature of the traditional space and collection at the Guildhall Art Gallery created a 'revelatory' comparability outside of their usual zone of experiential proximity. Some participants perceived the curatorial and interpretive context as not being thematic enough, or not explicitly enough drawing out narratives and themes within the paintings and between them. Each participant, irrespective of their taste for different styles of art, expressed an affective and engaged encounter through their experiential narrative.

For reference, the art galleries that were mentioned in comparison to the Guildhall

Art Gallery were as follows:

Art Gallery	Participant	Comparison
National Portrait Gallery, London	Aaron	For having a larger collection and a personal preference for historical portraits.
Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool	Fiona	Connection through Victorian painting collections.
Tate Modern, London	Pippa and Anna; Fiona	Overwhelming size and tiring visits; Effective thematic curating and interpretive resources.
ICA, London	Edith	Personal connection; preference for contemporary art.
The Photographers Gallery, London	Edith	Professional/personal connection

Overall the collective experiential narratives identify the Guildhall Art Gallery as a small, quiet and hidden art gallery in the City of London. A hidden gem with an engaging collection of historical paintings of London and an impressive array of Victorian paintings. The atmosphere provides a relaxing and immersive experience, in direct comparison to the bustling City outside. This makes the gallery specific for this research but also presents themes for considering the visitor experience to other art galleries and the elements that might contribute to a promotion of positive mental health and well-being.

OUTCOMES

Introduction

Painting has regained a privileged status. The medium's tactility, uniqueness, mythology and inherent ambiguities has allowed painting to become an open-ended vehicle for both artist and viewer to evoke personal recollections, to embody collective experience and reflect upon its own history in the age of mechanical reproduction.

(Gingeras, 2005)

From this ethnographic study it was possible to determine clear general outcomes, both contextually specific and generally applicable to other Museum Visitor Studies. The most evident outcomes that emerged from the small-scale ethnographic study will be set out below.

I also carried out a follow-up survey with the participants (answered by 7 out of the 11 participants) to determine the potency of memorability and if any further themes or nuances emerged retrospectively. The additional data from the questionnaire did not provide any further insight and was generally comparable to that provided in the initial interview (if presented in a slightly different order), hence it will only be minimally included here where it provides further insight. The main outcome from the follow-up questionnaire is that the consistency and memorability of the visitor experience with this group of participants transcended the temporal gap of 6 weeks between the research study and the follow-up questionnaire.

Number of paintings viewed in a 30-minute self-led visit

Through correlating the number of paintings that participants verbalised they perceived they had actively engaged with it was possible to deduce quantitative information about the number of paintings visitors engage with in a 30-minute time frame.

- Participants looked at the following number of paintings (sequentially in order of their participation in the study):
3 1 6 1 8 9 6 4 2 4 11

This produces the following average, median and mode:

Average: 5

Median: 4

Mode: 4, 6

Whilst the range does indicate a wide disparity between the number of paintings viewed by each participant the median and the mode ('measures of central tendency') substantiate the accuracy of the average for this research. This is based on the number of paintings the participants mentioned, or remembered, so might also differ from the number they actually looked at or engaged with on their visit. The number of paintings the participant looked at might more effectively be assessed if each of the participants had been observed or tracked and their line of sight, fixations and dwelling locations been identified by the researcher. Due to the focus of this research on visitor experiential narratives these latent engagements are less significant than the memorability of the visit, which indicates greater conscious impact. This does not mean the unconscious does not have an impact but due to the difficulty of accounting for this I am concentrating on collecting, correlating and analysing the more obviously accessible visitor information and narratives.

Memorability

Whilst the participants had recollections of their visit and the paintings they engaged with they were often unable to recall the name of the artist or the painting, or did not express knowledge of this information in the interview. Of the specific paintings and artists alluded to in the experiential narratives, only 18% of each was remembered collectively across all participants. This lack of memory of the factual information, or 'factual subordination', did not impede the engaged or

affective encounter with a painting as analysis suggests all participants fell into this category. Therefore, the argument is that the former perception of art historical knowledge being a required attribute for engaging with paintings is not essential.

It was also possible to determine from the data the aspect of the visit that made the greatest initial cognitive impact through memorability. In the experiential narratives each participant recounted, when prompted, the most memorable aspect of the visit. Out of all the participants 46% mentioned a specific painting, or paintings; 36% mentioned the collections generally; and 18% mentioned another aspect initially, followed by a subsequent mention of a specific painting or mention of the collections in general. Whilst it might be assumed, or hoped, that when a visitor leaves an art gallery they would remember the art, this outcome provides empirical evidence of the effectivity of the tangible environment to not override the experience of the paintings (and potentially enhance it for some visitors) (Serota in Beaven, 2011) (pp. 70 and 209). Even those who claimed they do not often visit art galleries, or prefer Contemporary art, still have a relatively vivid recollection of their visual engagement.

For the purpose of investigating the parameters and potential causes of memorability I asked the participants in the follow-up questionnaire to describe their most memorable visit to an art gallery and describe their most memorable encounter with a painting. The intention was to further develop the thematic criteria for the engagement with art galleries and paintings, and also to incite any additional criteria that might arise from being asked about memorable experiences outside of the confines of the memorability of the Guildhall Art Gallery research study. It transpired that each of the experiential narratives provided based on memorability could be assigned to the thematic analysis framework. The memorable art gallery encounter fell particularly into the categories of: environment (tangible/intangible); collections; artistic execution; personal connection; acquisition of knowledge; and cultural and geographic contextualisation. The memorable experience of a painting fell particularly into the categories of: personal connection (including professional interest, personal taste

and childhood memories); artistic execution; revelation; and acquisition of knowledge. There were also coherent accounts of a sense of the overall experience of visiting art galleries, which were presented through an embodied experiential and sensorial contextualisation.

External impositions

With any visit to a cultural organisation there is the possibility of external impositions on the visitor experience, as perceived by the participants in this research study. These are summarised through an analysis of the data as: an overly populated environment (e.g. gallery tour impeding natural flow of visit); aural intrusion from too much noise; 'threshold affect' (e.g. security); imposition of curatorial and interpretive strategy; and the visual disturbance of light (reflecting on glass of paintings). Whilst these impositions can negatively impact on a visit – and could perhaps preclude the occurrence of an immersive, affective encounter with the paintings – they are also often unavoidable, or uncontrollable by the visitor. Any mentioned impositions did not deter participants from having an affective and engaged experience overall in this study.

The Role of the 'Surrogate'

In this research there were apparent examples of the role the surrogate plays as a pre-visit resource and an enhancement of visual engagement. Two examples from participants demonstrated how the intellectual and visual engagement with paintings in books informed their understanding and interest in particular paintings in art gallery collections. Instead of undermining the significance of the experience of the original painting this emphasised how surrogates can effectively complement experience.

The one thing I would like to add is the importance of art books for me. Of course, nothing can substitute for seeing originals (though most galleries are pretty sterile settings) but art books are very important for me.

Marcus
(Follow-up questionnaire)

Escapism and Liminality

The experiential narratives of participants showed how visitors use the art gallery as a form of escapism, through the remedial benefits of liminal space (Duncan, 1995) and 'Attention Restoration' (Kaplan, Bardwell and Slakter, 1993; Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989; Ratcliffe, 2012). This escapism is both the literal sense of escape from the world outside and the psychological escapism provided by a change of context and positive distraction. Many participant quotes in the analysis alluded to how the gallery made them feel 'out of the world', 'submerged', 'at one with yourself' and took you to 'another space'. It was 'quiet, private, peaceful' and 'relaxing', providing for a 'contemplative atmosphere'. The participants were interested to discover 'where the painting takes you' through the sense of 'evasion' from everyday life and the immersion in a 'dream'. I would argue that the combination of the cultivated gallery space and the visual engagement of the paintings combined to provide the escapism and immersion in a narrative dream space. Whilst the environment of the gallery creates the unique, contextual environment for this experience, the paintings provide the anchored focus for affectivity and emotional engagement.

Prior knowledge and Accumulative Experience

There was an evident demonstration of the influence of prior experiential and intellectual knowledge of participants, which is projected onto the art gallery experience and the engagement with paintings. It is factual information, recollection and the stimuli for personal connection that provides significant affectivity and emotional engagement. It could be argued that those with factual knowledge will have a different type of encounter to those with no factual

knowledge – a more intellectual rather than directly visceral and emotional connection – but this would be difficult to prove. Whatever aspect encourages visual engagement and affectivity is commendable and could be conducive to an overall emotional impact and sense of positive mental health and well-being – through aspects such as revelation, fulfilment, discovery and wonder.

It is also significant that those who brought prior knowledge from visiting the Pre-Raphaelites exhibition at Tate Britain had subsequent greater memorability of the experience (Falk and Dierking, 1990). Two particular participants emphasised their engagement with the Pre-Raphaelite painters, such as Rossetti, whose *La Ghirlandata* is on display at the Guildhall Art Gallery (Figure 12, Appendix 1, p. 313). One participant mentioned this in the follow-up questionnaire as the most memorable painting they engaged with on their visit, as included in the interview:

I can say that the first thing that I remember is the Pre-Raphaelite paintings, which were the painting that I first focused on. I had also visit an exhibition in Tate during the first module of my MA. So I guess the fact that I had some previous knowledge together with the feeling that I can make some connections to things that I had already taught was an important aspect. I felt familiar and motivated to explore more.

Anna

This demonstrates not a ‘loss of aura’ from over-exposure to art but the intensification and potency of experience through the prior engagement with artworks or styles, and the impact of memorability on subsequent encounters.

Visiting Style

Whilst this research focused on the individual, unaccompanied visitor to the art gallery it also highlighted the varying preferred social visiting dynamics of participants, and therefore visitors generally. There are those who see visiting art galleries as a social activity and prefer to visit with others. In opposition to this there are those who prefer to visit alone as they perceive that it provides an

undistracted engagement and greater immersion (p. 247). There are benefits and detriments to both visiting approaches, whilst it is likely that those who visit art galleries do so within different social groups throughout their lifetime. These social dynamics include other variations, such as visiting with family, friends, a partner or friend, as part of a tour group – each social group providing different experiential parameters. In addition to this there is the context of visitor behaviour:

I always go round exhibitions... nearly always go round them a second time much more quickly...

... I am very bad at going with other people. If I do that's fine, but I'm not really going to have a conversation with them while I'm looking around.

Marcus

Disjuncture and Anomalies

As with our experience, perception and memory of the world, and expression of it, this research presented disjuncture and anomalies in the experiential narratives. This included anomalies in experience or misinterpretation of factual information, producing cognitive dissonance. Although this was not detrimental to the overall experience and perception of the visitor an awareness of this is important when collecting and analysing data in Museum Visitor Studies.

Framing the Experience: The Role of Image Capturing

Participants were able to take photos of their self-led tour if they chose, although only 45% (5 out of 11) captured images of their experience. The use of capturing images as a form of experiential 'fixation', and the approach to framing, could form an additional significant research project not possible here. These photos were used as prompts in the interview to aid the experiential narrative but also provide a significant route into a potential tangential research study. The photos taken by participants and visitors provide a static fixation that partially maps the experiential journey around the gallery, whilst highlighting points of significance

for the visitor from their own cerebral and visual perspective. Within this research the limited analysis of the photographic framing provides a contrast between those who have taken photos of the whole painting, including the frame, and those who have zoomed in to capture specific details. More research would be required to determine whether this is related to their approach to engagement. There seems to be no readily available research into how visitors frame their photographs and the relationship this has with their experience but this provides an interesting area for future inquiry.

Expectations

All visitors provide an 'entrance narrative' to their art gallery visit, temporally and extensively dependent on when they decided to make the visit (pp. 71-72). In retrospect I would have liked to ask participants directly if the visit to the Guildhall Art Gallery had met their expectations to determine more fully the post-visit outcomes – such as fulfilment, disappointment, surprise and revelation. Whilst some participants mentioned their expectations in the narrative of their general visiting experience, or there was implicit inference to it, this could have been addressed in greater depth. From the experiential narratives *surprise* and *revelation* seemed to be the most potent indication of expectations being exceeded. This was always mentioned in an affirmative context and hence contributory to the overall sense of well-being provided by the gallery visit.

Parameters of the Research

The limitations for the participants' visit to the Guildhall Art Gallery due to the parameters of the research emerged as an outcome. As with any research, the influence and parameters of the methodology and the participants' conscious involvement was evident. Participants mentioned aspects such as how the visit was more structured than their usual visits to an art gallery, or how it influenced their orientation and dwell time:

And then, as I'm sure you noticed, I didn't have much time, but as you told me the other places I thought I'd zoom round them... I was sort of running out of time so I zoomed round the rest of the London Gallery, but doing no more than walking. And then just settled particularly at the ones I most liked in the room where I started, the mainly Victorian room. And I am somebody who normally goes round galleries quite quickly so I thought, before we started that half an hour would be fine... I wouldn't have wanted vastly longer, but I just wanted probably 10 minutes longer, if I'd been on my own.

Marcus

I was definitely aware while looking at the pictures (and occasional sculpture and stained glass windows) that I was going subsequently to be interviewed, so I was less 'taken over' by the pictures than is usually the case when I am viewing. I was also aware that I only had so much time which, again, constrained the extent to which I was able to lose myself in the pictures.

Marcus

(Follow-up questionnaire)

As previously discussed, these parameters and restrictions were unavoidable due to the intentions of the study and the required methodology for effective and efficient data collection and analysis. I acknowledge that the participants' awareness of their involvement in a research study, and the imposed strictures of the methodology, would influence the outcomes to a certain extent. It is hoped that the overall data is generally reflective of the experience of visiting art galleries and engaging with paintings, hence retaining its credibility.

Summary: Combined Affectivity

It has been confirmed from the ethnographic research study that individual aspects of the visitor experience cannot easily be assessed in isolation to determine the overall impact of the visit, particularly the impact on mental health and well-being. For example, those who did not perceive the art gallery particularly favourably still claimed to have enjoyed the visit; those who preferred Contemporary paintings managed to have an affective and engaged encounter with

a painting, or paintings; those who did not like the layout of the gallery found its collections interesting. Therefore, though certain aspects of the gallery or visiting experience might not be to the individual liking of a participant or visitor, the overall perceived experience could be affirmative – contributing to a temporally located, and perhaps accumulative, sense of positive mental health and well-being. This represents how the visitor experience is a complex and interrelated nexus, which can be tentatively unpicked for analysis but remains intrinsically intertwined. The experience of the art gallery visitor is constructed and experienced in its *totality* (p. 100). From this research study there has been an investigative inquiry and analysis of the varying elements of the visitor experience of engaging with paintings in the art gallery, with particular emphasis on the subjectively affective and emotive capabilities of paintings.

I'm going with a successful experience from here, because I have seen some things that relate to me, in a very personal way.

Faye

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Introduction

This research study, and the resulting thesis, has developed understanding of the visitor experience of art galleries and the affectivity of engaging with paintings. The purpose of the research was to explore and ascertain any connections between these experiences and the role of mental health and well-being in the art gallery, focussing on the unaccompanied visitor directly engaging with collections. Overall there has been evidence that visiting art galleries could contribute to the sense of positive mental health and well-being of the visitor, based on their own personal connection and predilection for these visits. There are also implicit demonstrations that the triadic components (object, institution, visitor) that make up the experience, and based on the variability of the specific visit, could also be conducive to a negatively perceived sense of mental health and well-being. The experience of engaging with paintings has been understood in a similar way – to have an affective and emotionally engaged encounter with a painting could contribute to self-knowledge and developed emotional literacy, whilst providing an overall sense of positive mental health and well-being. A generally affirmative experience could still transpire even if the provoked emotions and symptomatic affectivity of certain elements have been of a destabilised or ‘negative’ nature. There is however a pervading problematisation presented in this research – the difficulty of isolating the contributory factor to the emotional and psychological outcomes of visiting the art gallery and engaging with paintings based on an inherent supposition of the totality of experience. Even the participants in the research, whilst identifying some highlighted components of their visit, perceived a totality of the experience that produced an overall outcome, or *gestalt* (Falk and Dierking, 1992, 2012). Therefore, as alluded to in the introduction to this thesis – the fluidity, variability and intangibility of emotions, affect and psychological propensity makes it difficult, if not impossible, to provide a definitive and static outcome to the research within the disciplines of mental health and emotional well-being. Through thorough, expansive and varied research into the experience of engagement we are able to develop greater understanding of these indeterminate entities and create a thematic framework for analysis and

comprehension, which this thesis has achieved. Over time, and as knowledge and experience develops, so too will the theoretical and thematic framework. There are also many tangential paths that lead off from this particular study that will further open up the field. For these reasons this research is very much a starting point and catalyst for future progression.

Originality of the Study

The original contribution to knowledge made by this study is the enhanced understanding of the visitor experience of art galleries and engagement with paintings. Through a multi-methodological and in-depth approach to the research I have been able to gain a comprehensive insight into the affectivity and emotionality of the experiential capacity of the art gallery, as well as more effectively define the concept of the 'engaged experience'. This has been carried out through developing the 21st century perspective of Aesthetics. The developed understanding of the affective and emotional aspects of the visitor experience has provided a foundation for assessing and defining the claims of the promotion of positive mental health and well-being made by the cultural sector. As this theory, research, and practice has previously been predominantly based on social and organised activity, my research provides a new facet of the unaccompanied visitor engaging directly with collections to determine the role of mental health and well-being.

The findings of my research are most innovative in the lack of fear in problematising the increasing focus on the role of museums and art galleries in promoting positive mental health and well-being, without undermining the important, beneficial and effective practice already being carried out. Whilst there is an undeniable and commendable realisation of the interaction with cultural organisations providing positive and potentially remedial benefits to mental health and well-being, the evaluation of this impact is problematic beyond the emphasis on social interactivity and organised activity. There are many variables and intangible entities to determine what exactly is causing the positive impact and how it is occurring in these types of visitor experience. That doesn't mean this is

not occurring or is not because of the art gallery itself, though the benefits from inclusion and sociability manifest in various and diverse settings and activities. It is understood from my research, and hopefully legitimised, that it is not always possible to identify a definitive answer or solution. However, it is still important to endeavour to carry out the most efficient and effective research possible to continue to inform and develop best practice and enlightening theory.

My research is pioneering through taking the individual out of the socialised and communally interactive context and focussing on the experience of an unaccompanied visit to an art gallery. Many people visit art galleries alone in the UK every year but there is little research into their experiences; how they contextualise and narrativise that experience; and the impact these experiences have on them. It cannot be a disadvantage to further understand the unaccompanied visitor to the art gallery and the ways they engage with the environment and its collections, or to identify affective and emotive impact related to mental health and well-being.

My thesis is an investigation into the 'engaged experience' of art gallery visitors to provide narratives on the impact on mental health and well-being in a general sense, and the thematic elements of affective and emotive encounters with paintings in a more specific sense. It has been possible to create an account of the specificity of the individual to provide a 'collective experiential narrative' and a defined thematic framework for analysis and understanding of visitor experience, which could also be used to implement informed evaluation by other cultural organisations in the future. For the purpose of informing the related field, the Literature Review is knowingly the first collective presentation and critique of the general perception of affect, mental health and well-being in art galleries in the cultural sector.

Contributions and Outcomes

Substantiating the phenomenological experience of paintings

Painting does not imitate the world, but is a world of its own.

(Merleau-Ponty, 2006)

An experience of paintings necessarily exists in relation to many facets of our lives and the human world, and is a reflection of our lived relations and being-in-the-world. We make sense of paintings by relating them to our daily experience, to images and reproductions that we have seen, to the painter's perceived innate and manifested qualities, and to textual information available. In this process of drawing on our store of personal experience, we gradually build up a personal narrative which is indispensable to understanding and interpreting the painting.

(Tam, 2006: 294)

Phenomenology is an integral aspect of the affectively engaged experience and the construction of narrative. My research further substantiates the phenomenological perspective of engagement with paintings as initially defined by previous philosophers, writers and researchers (Gadamer, 1986, 2004; Merleau-Ponty, 2000, 2006; Parry, 2010; Tam, 2006). Our encounters with paintings are informed by our experience and knowledge of the world, whilst also developing and adapting our experience and knowledge. This was evident in my research through the connections participants made to paintings and the acquisition they made from these encounters (e.g. the acquisition of factual information; self-knowledge and development; visual experience and sensibility). These encounters are never static or easily defined autonomously but become part of our experiential narrative. Through phenomenology the visitor as embodied eye (pp. 88-89) indulges in a process of logogenesis (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 43) (pp. 75, 88-89, 96) in the narrative dream space (pp. 96-98) whilst engaging with an inter/active image (pp. 80-90), projecting their contextualised subjectivity and memories onto the world around them.

Contribution to understanding of human and visitor experience

My research has made a substantial contribution to the understanding of human experience, and particularly the visitor experience of art galleries and engagement with paintings. This has included adoption of a phenomenologically-infused research paradigm and a wider comprehension of human experience. We are able to better understand the ways visitors engage with art galleries and paintings; the outcomes of these experiences; and how and why people use the art gallery as a resource in the wider context of their lives. My research presents theoretically and empirically informed understanding of visitor motivations, types of visitor and types of engagement, as well as concepts of the painting and art gallery. Through a triadic amalgamation of three ingredients (object, institution, visitor) it is possible to assert experience as a process of adopting the role of the embodied eye in the subjectively-conceived narrative dream space. This knowledge will assist in helping cultural organisations better understand their visitors' behaviours and how to most effectively and relevantly engage them in the future. The research has also provided a clearer connection between affect, mental health, emotional well-being, the art gallery and paintings.

Defining the affective and emotive capacity of paintings

My research has assisted in defining the affective and emotive encounter with paintings, as well as the linguistic expression and narratives used by visitors to describe and contextualise these experiences. From analysis of the collected data a thematic framework was devised – produced from common themes that emerged through the process of coding that could subsequently be applied to any latter research or analysis. This thematic framework consisted of the elements of the visitor experience that emerged and the affective entities associated with this engagement. I was able to determine that affectivity and emotion is manifested through incarnations such as memory, sense perception, revelation, relaxation, happiness and perplexity, as well as through processes of empathy, affection, fascination and intimacy (Armstrong, 2001; Elkins, 2001). This information could latterly be used to develop further evaluative resources.

Emancipating the spectator

This research could arguably be an example of liberating the visitor to the art gallery through re-establishing the previously perceivably elitist requirement for the 'capital' of factual knowledge and the acquisition of taste when engaging with and critiquing paintings. Whilst visitors do often require or desire the acquisition of factual information, this research represented a possibility to engage with a painting through visceral, affective and emotive human faculties, without the compulsory necessity of prior factual knowledge of Art History or other related disciplines. This assertion elevates the visceral, affective and emotionally engaged experience and provides a catalyst for the dissolution of the barrier caused by the perceived notion that factual knowledge is required to engage with paintings. The emotive and affective elements of encounter are as valid as the intellectual ones, whilst visitors with little knowledge of paintings should be encouraged to engage with paintings based on instinctive connection.

Some purist art historians and scholars might argue that for a painting to be understood comprehensively it needs to be understood within the context and narrative it was created (Baxandall, 1972). I would argue that a painting can be just as important as a resource through self-projection and hence a catalyst for affectively and emotively engaged experience. Both approaches are valid, whilst being complementary. For example, in the case of *The Music Lesson* (1877) by Frederic Leighton (Figure 19, Appendix 1, p. 315) on display at the Guildhall Art Gallery, I am aware through previous knowledge of Art History that the two figures are not mother and daughter, as sometimes interpreted by research participants and visitors. However, the relationship between the two females within the artwork can be construed as an ambiguous and universalised maternal construction. There is no doubt a display of affection and closeness between these two characters, which is synonymous with that bond between a mother and daughter. Within the narrative of a painting there is room for negotiation and re-interpretation – an example of re-imagined viewing. This is due to the particular humanistic or expressive qualities often recognised by a viewer through empathy, irrespective of their own factual knowledge of the story within the contextual production of the painting.

Engagement can be viably enhanced through interpretation but this alternative route to accessibility provides a personal and subjective starting point to further explore and discover more about the painting, based on the desired agenda of the visitor and their instinctive response. The research outcomes have also presented the development of a more evident connection between the intellectual and the emotional, as particularly seen in the online (p. 147) and on-site surveys (p. 167). This connection is being promoted by the encouragement of 'emotionally tinged learning' (Dwyer, 2011: 3), which is conducive to greater memorability and contextualisation.

Investigating and critiquing the role of mental health and well-being as part of the art gallery visiting experience

A fundamental intention of this research was to critique and ultimately further investigate the role of mental health and well-being in the art gallery visiting experience. In respect of the social and organised emphasis of prior research and practice, I have identified that engagement with paintings and visits to art galleries provides affectivity and emotions associated with mental health and well-being for unaccompanied visitors. I have also established that visitors actively visit art galleries for the therapeutic benefits provided through distraction, immersion, liminality and Attention Restoration (Kaplan, Bardwell and Slakter, 1993; Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989).

A Problematisation

Through carrying out the aforementioned contribution to knowledge in the field, an organic outcome of this thesis was the problematisation of researching, assessing and evaluating mental health and well-being in the cultural sector. The initial disclosure from the nascent stages of the research was that the practice and research in the field was heavily focussed on social interaction and organised activities, hence the outcomes of research and evaluation arguably being related to the social aspects of engagement rather than the direct engagement with the cultural organisation or its collections.

Whilst the social is an integral component of the visitor experience for some

people, and unavoidable in some cases, this is not the only aspect that ferments the roles of mental health and well-being in the art gallery. Due to the 'measurability' of the outcomes of social interaction and productivity compared to the intangibility of engaging with a painting, this social and productive experience is a more effective path to assessing the importance and potency of the impact on mental health and well-being. Moreover, in the projects that assert the claim to promoting positive mental health and well-being, sociability is an essential criterion for those taking part, including the elderly and those with mental health disorders who might otherwise feel excluded or disenchanted. This does not mean that direct engagement with collections, and particularly by the unaccompanied visitor, is not also associated with mental health and well-being, it is just harder to assess the impact in these instances due to the intangibility of outcomes and the fluidity of the experience.

The complex outcome is that there are many contributing variables to the role of mental health and well-being of the visitor or participant in the cultural sector, whether being involved in a socially interactive and organised activity or visiting alone. Therefore, the overall outcome from the overall experience can be assessed, and the individual elements tentatively investigated and identified, but it is difficult to determine the presiding factor that contributes to the outcome of a sense of positive mental health and well-being, with the likeliness that there are many contributing factors of varying degrees. This problematisation does not indicate failure in the research or the practice in the cultural sector, but actually provides greater understanding and a more general, emancipatory approach to research and practice. The endeavours of the cultural sector, and experiences of the visitors, can now be appreciated and commended for being an experiential *messy bricolage* (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Law, 2004, 2007; Law and Urry, 2004) composing of multiple, varied and diffuse entities in which the affective, emotive and visceral have an elevated position, and are able to contribute to an indication of positive mental health and well-being.

As has been explored and determined by this thesis, it is very difficult to untangle, isolate and identify the complex labyrinth of factors involved in the experience of

engaging with paintings in an art gallery – the social, intellectual, emotional and spiritual (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2005), the educational, recreational, physical, psychological, tangible, intangible and so forth. Even when attempting to focus on just mental health and well-being, the many intertwined factors make it nearly impossible to extract and distil individual elements that impact on an individual, or group, visiting an art gallery to determine the overriding factor that is conducive to a particular kind of visitor experience. It is however possible to acquire key themes and vocabulary from carrying out Museum Visitor Studies, which can go some way to helping us understand audiences better, as well as provide and accommodate their needs and desires. Suffice it to say that whilst we cannot reliably determine the isolated, overriding factor for experiential outcomes we can assess the overall outcomes themselves, i.e. if the visitor had an enjoyable or unenjoyable experience; if the visitor found the experience engaging or disengaging; if the visit and the engagement with paintings (or other collections) contributed to an overall sense of positive mental health and well-being as part of a much wider life experience. The concluding outcome of this thesis is based on an insightful acknowledgement of various contributing factors to the visitor experience, but more overtly displays the outcomes that these contributing factors create and the fact that visitors are engaging and continue to engage with paintings in art galleries.

Developing the use of specific and collective experiential narratives as a mode of evaluation and assessment

Due to the problematisation embedded within this research a methodology was required that provides in-depth information and is able to account for the complexity of visitor experience. A multi-methodological, ‘messy bricolage’ was employed to collect experiential narratives, or stories of experience, of the participants, and in turn create a coherent narrative of the field throughout the thesis. My research developed the use of the ‘experiential narrative’ as a resource for evaluation and to assess the impact of the art gallery and paintings on the visitor. There was a bi-fold approach to the narrativisation of experience through first collecting and analysing specific, individual experiential narratives and then extracting themes and generalisations that could be used to produce a collective

narrative, for the purpose of concise presentation and comprehension. This methodological approach provided an in-depth and layered interpretive strategy for understanding visitor experience, which afforded effective evaluative insight that could be applicable to other visitor research studies, with an awareness of the complex and time-consuming logistical implications of this particular methodology.

Purpose and Potential for the Cultural Sector

The purpose of this research, and its original contribution to knowledge, has been an enhanced and developed comprehension of the visitor experience of art galleries and the engagement with paintings for the intention of investigating the impact on mental health and well-being, through a particular focus on affect and emotion. Through this process there has been an investigation of the reason people engage with paintings and visit art galleries; the ways in which they do this; and the affective and emotive outcomes. Whilst this is a research study in itself it also provides a foundation for potential future development in the cultural and research sectors based on visitor behaviour and visit outcomes. There is an inherent aim to “work towards the establishment and potential ‘transferability’ of effective strategies to be recommended to the wider museum community” (Hooper-Greenhill et al, 2001). My thesis also contributes to the current interest in the role of the art gallery in the increased focus on considerations of mental health and well-being in the cultural sector, as well as national agendas more widely. From the research and the emerging thematic framework it has been possible to determine these overriding general themes that are applicable across the cultural sector:

- Personal connection (*religere*, p. 39): subjective association, projection of memory and taste:

The data collected through this research and its subsequent analysis has determined that the predominant elements of an affective and emotionally ‘engaged experience’ with a painting in an art gallery (or indeed a surrogate/reproduction of a painting) is through personal connection of subjective association with the image or with the memories it invokes. This

also includes humanistic empathy (*Einfühlung*) (Bourdieu, 1979; Elkins, 2001) and the recognition of the everyday in artworks (Tam, 2006). Engaged experiences often emerge when an individual projects a memory onto a painting, enhancing the experience and intensifying an affective encounter. In this research these projected memories were generally of an affirmative character – that is a memory, or memories, that invoke affective emotions such as happiness, relaxation, nostalgia or spiritual transcendence. The memory of acquired experiential or factual knowledge contributed to an enhanced engaged experience, whilst not being an essential criterion for engagement.

The Guildhall Art Gallery study provided various examples of the implementation of memory. One participant had an emotionally engaged experience with a painting that reminded him of his childhood through a nostalgic scene of infantile seaside revelry. Another participant connected with a painting on a more spiritual level through iconography within a painting reminding them of the symbolic objects used within their own religious practices.

The projection of memories produced another theme that emerged from the research, which was a dualism between lived experience and the thoughts of an alternative or imagined existence, considering what could have been or can't possibly be now. This relates to Elkins' (2001) conception of time and absence creating an affective impact in visual imagery (pp. 38-39). One participant engaged with a painting that appeared to show a mother and daughter, or at least maternal relationship, which invoked knowledge that she herself was unlikely to have a daughter (Figure 19, p. 315). This was not perceived by the participant as a negative alternative or imagined experience but as a cathartic acknowledgement of personal circumstance.

Another path into an engaged experience was through personal taste. Whilst the concept of taste has its origins in narrowly defined 18th century

Aesthetics and the Bourdieuan Sociology of the 20th century, when addressed in the context of the art gallery in the 21st century it is much more varied, accessible, encompassing, subjective, multi-narrativological and polycentric. Though habitually elusive, inconclusive and often untraceable, taste becomes a purveyor of our path through life in attempting to establish an identity and navigate a life of positive mental health and well-being, in pursuit of the Good Life – often achieved by adhering to and seeking experiences based on our own personal predilection. All research participants and visitors demonstrate an example of subjective taste accountability through chosen experiential navigation and gravitation towards certain elements within the art gallery. This was particularly evident with participants who focused predominantly on the sculptures in the gallery in the experiential narratives, based on interest and enjoyment, despite the research focus being on paintings. It is often hard to determine the tastes of a wide and diverse audience in visitor engagement with cultural organisations. However, with informed insight it is possible to produce a creatively executed programme of exhibitions and events, whilst using variation to appeal to different tastes. Through using layered interpretation and engagement it is also possible to cater for a diverse and multiple taste agenda.

- Social interaction:

Even if it is difficult to assess and evaluate the affective, emotional and psychological outcomes of an individual engaging with collections and paintings, we are at least able to determine that social interaction is in fact conducive to an engaging, educational, insightful and interesting experience. Although my research has been an investigation of the experience of unaccompanied visitors, with dissolution of organised activity and planned interactivity, there has been an indication of the reason museums are able to use the social and physically productive aspects of visitor engagement activities to promote work in the field of mental health and well-being. This is because there are more direct and tangible outcomes from social interaction and planned activities than in the case of one single

individual directly engaging with collections on their own. Determination of the social and its more obvious outcomes is still of course problematic when it comes to assessing affect, emotions, well-being and mental health as there are many contributing factors to these. It is also difficult to dislocate anything from a socially conceived or experienced context.

The social also plays an important role in learning, contextualisation and meaning-making through intellectual and experiential 'scaffolding', and the production of shared interpretive strategies (Hooper-Greenhill et al, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978). Social visitor experiences of engaging directly with collections would also produce affective and emotive outcomes in their own right that might be conducive to the promotion of positive mental health and well-being. As this is such an expansive field an additional in-depth study would be needed to credibly investigate this area.

The Painting as *Memento Mori* and *Memento Vitae*

As a concluding encompassment of my research as presented in this thesis I would like to present paintings, and the engaged experience of them, as *memento mori* and *memento vitae*. This is particularly in light of their experiential, affective and emotive capacities and the implementation of the '*lieu de mémoire*' (Rivera-Oracca, 2009). As two of the resounding thematic devices that emerged from analysis of the engaged experience were personal connection and memory, the painting becomes a vehicle for emotion and affectivity through providing a reminder of experiential, embodied aspects of our life; or as a reminder of our own mortality (or literally, a reminder of death). These concepts relate to Elkins' three reasons for paintings eliciting an emotional, or tearful response, which are time; religion (or the sacred in a secular sense); or a painful absence of something sacred or spiritual, an absence of God for some (Elkins, 2001) (pp. 38-39). These elements of time, memory, mortality and spirituality are significant contributing factors to whether a painting is conducive to an affective or emotive experience, and therefore an enhancement of positive mental health and well-being, as well as the development of emotional literacy.

The reminder of life and mortality is encompassed in every aspect of the experience of engaging with paintings in the art gallery. Through our experiences, cultivation of identity, and affective and emotive encounters we are actively embodying our experience of life and the world, thus enacting, projecting and producing memories of life. Whilst the implementation of the *memento mori* is less evident it is implicitly present through its inherent connection to the *memento vitae* – to be reminded of life is also to have an awareness of mortality and death. There are examples of experiences of *memento mori* where content or affectivity of a painting might make the visitor focus on mortality or death, whether through a representation of death (e.g. *The Death of Chatterton* (1856-58) by Henry Wallis; or *Ophelia* (1851-52) by John Everett Millais); or through an evocative, emotive effect created by the use of colour and composition (e.g. Rothko paintings, e.g. Figure 3, Appendix 1, p. 310).

There is literature available about death in art (e.g. Pascale, 2009) but little apparent evidence of paintings providing a *memento mori* or *memento vitae* as part of the visitor experience in art galleries. Therefore, this concept, whether accepted or contested, is an additional original contribution to the field through contextualising paintings and the experience of them within an alternative concept – connecting the paintings with the visitor through the intrinsic human inevitability of life and mortality.

Development

The most apparent potential area of development of my research is further evaluation and research projects based on the visceral, affective and emotive experience, and the impact of these experiences on the mental health and well-being of visitors. There is also potential by researchers, art galleries and art historians to further investigate the role of the art gallery as *lieu de memoire*; and the painting as *memento mori* and *memento vitae*. Art galleries and other cultural organisations could use the thematic framework for analysis and associated vocabulary produced through this research to inform their own evaluation, or as a foundation for further development and research. Cultural organisations could

also implement the use of specific and collective experiential narratives as a tool for evaluation. My research and thesis provides a foundation in understanding visitors from a research perspective whilst creating an opportunity for professionals in the cultural sector to take up the mantle to develop practice and evaluation within their own organisations, based on their own professional expertise and the contributions to knowledge made by this thesis.

The expansive and in-depth approach used in my research is time-consuming and complex but the fruitful outcomes of understanding have made it a worthwhile pursuit. My methodological approach could be carried out occasionally in the cultural sector to supplement, strengthen and deepen the evaluative strategies already employed. At the very least, this thesis could contribute to the understanding the cultural sector has of the visitor experience, even if the thematic framework and evaluative methodology are not actively employed.

Summary

From my research it has emerged that art galleries and the engagement with paintings can create an affective and emotionally engaged experience, conducive to a temporal sense of positive mental health well-being. This temporal impact on mental health and well-being could become accumulative when the experience of visiting art galleries is re-enacted over time. Even the more challenging emotional encounters, where darker and deeper emotions are explored, can be conducive to a sense of positive mental health and well-being through self-discovery, empathy, socio-cultural contextualisation, personal development or catharsis. I have also established that visitor motivation to attend art galleries is sometimes for the liminal, immersive and escapist experience. It is therefore possible to substantiate the role of mental health and well-being in the visitor experience of art galleries, and even corroborate with the centuries-old doctrine that paintings are affective, as determined through the collection and analysis of experiential narratives.

My research is comparable to previous research carried out by Tam (2006) through inquiry into the phenomenological, embodied and experiential affective art gallery experience of non-specialists. Tam concluded that the experience of the

art gallery is based on a connection with everyday lived experience. Whilst including the influence of lived experience, my research has extended the scope of participants and data through a more expansive and diversified sample. I have also further categorised the forms of affective and emotive engagement and situated it within the wider contemporary cultural sphere with its focus on mental health and well-being. My research has provided a thematic framework and demonstration of the use of experiential narratives as a methodological tool to substantiate the rise of the visceral in line with current museological agendas (e.g. Museums Association, 2013).

My research has demonstrated a journey from literature to an empirical study, investigating emergent themes based on the 'affective charge' (Freedberg, 1991) and the 'power of images' (Gombrich, 2000). Using experiential narratives I have provided accounts of affective, embodied, emotive and visceral experience associated with the aura (Benjamin, 1935), liminality (Duncan, 1995), Attention Restoration (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989), and the criteria for an affective experience as devised by Elkins (2001). Through this I have substantiated the claim that we are seeking '*what it is to be human*' (O'Neil, 1994) when we visit an art gallery through engaging in a sensorial, dialogic process that situates engagement with paintings as inter/active *memento vitae* and *memento mori*, related to potential mental health and well-being. It is the Ancient pursuit of the 'Good Life' that informs and encourages our experiences related to mental health and well-being, whilst we become the embodied eye to implement this in the narrative dream space of the art gallery.

Using experiential narratives as a methodological tool for visitor research provided a demonstration of vocabulary and themes that become referents of the actual experience in visitor expression, which can create an identifiable framework for cultural organisations carrying out in-depth qualitative research. It is still difficult to definitively determine how and why these outcomes associated with affect, emotions, mental health and well-being occur, or to isolate the dominant contributing factor. We can however substantially develop our understanding of the engagement with paintings in the art gallery through an expansive and multi-

methodological approach to garner as many perspectives as possible. This will account for the contestation, fluidity and tangibility of these entities, influencing and informing the experiential narrative devised to '*determine cultural value*' (Guy, 2002). This thesis has been both a problematisation of the field and a development of knowledge, hence rather than being research that is conclusive it is very much just the beginning.

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www.together-uk.org

APPENDIX 1: Illustrations



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 1

Listed

1886

William Henry Gore

Oil on canvas, 92 x 61 cm

Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(pp. 15-18, 235)



Image: © The Art Institute of Chicago, 2014

Figure 2

Mater Dolorosa

(Sorrowing Virgin)

c. 1480/1500

Workshop of Dieric Bouts

Oil on panel, 38.7 x 30.3 cm

The Art Institute of Chicago

(pp. 41-42)



Image: © Tate, London, 2014

Figure 3

Red on Maroon, Section 4 1959

1959

Mark Rothko

Tate Collection, London

Oil paint, acrylic paint, glue tempera
on canvas, 26.67 x 23.88 cm

Tate Collection, London

(pp. 141, 277)



Image: © Musée du Louvre, Paris, 2014

Figure 4

Mona Lisa:

***Portrait of Lisa Gherardini,
wife of Francesco del Giocondo***

c. 1503 – 1506

Leonardo da Vinci

Oil on poplar, 77 cm × 53 cm

Musée du Louvre, Paris

(pp. 149-152, 340-343)



Image: © Tate, London, 2014

Figure 5
Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose
 1885 – 86
 John Singer Sargent
 Oil on canvas, 174 x 154 cm
 Tate Britain, London

(pp. 153-154)



Image: © National Gallery, London, 2014

Figure 6
Surprised!
 1891
 Henri Rousseau
 Oil on canvas, 129.8 x 161.9 cm
 National Gallery, London

(pp. 155-156)



Image: © National Galleries Scotland, London, 2014

Figure 7
The Trinity Altarpiece
 c. 1478 – 79
 Hugo van der Goes
 Oil on panel, 202 x 100.5 cm
 National Galleries Scotland,
 Edinburgh

(pp. 157-158)

 <p>Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014</p>	<p>Figure 8 <i>Israel in Egypt</i> 1867 Sir Edward J. Poynter Oil on canvas, 137 x 317 cm Guildhall Art Gallery, London</p> <p>(pp. 170, 241)</p>
 <p>Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014</p>	<p>Figure 9 <i>Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee Service, 22 June 1897</i> 1897 – 1899 Andrew Carrick Gow Oil on canvas, 142 x 244 cm Guildhall Art Gallery, London</p> <p>(pp. 170, 174, 239)</p>
 <p>Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014</p>	<p>Figure 10 <i>The Trial of Sir William Wallace at Westminster</i> Date unknown William Bell Scott Oil on canvas, 137 x 185 cm Guildhall Art Gallery, London</p> <p>(pp. 170, 173-174)</p>
 <p>Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014</p>	<p>Figure 11 <i>Herod's Birthday Feast</i> 1868 Edward Armitage Oil on canvas, 155 x 277 cm Guildhall Art Gallery, London</p> <p>(pp. 170)</p>



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 12
La Ghirlandata
 1873
 Dante Gabriel Rossetti
 Oil on canvas, 124 x 85 cm
 Guildhall Art Gallery, London
 (pp. 170, 214, 225, 234, 259)



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 13
'The Eve of St Agnes'
 1848
 William Holman Hunt
 Oil on canvas, 75 x 113 cm
 Guildhall Art Gallery, London
 (pp. 170)



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 14
George Dance's Design for the New London Bridge, London
 1802
 William Daniell
 Oil on canvas, 92 x 182 cm
 Guildhall Art Gallery, London
 (pp. 171, 235)





 <p>Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014</p>	<p>Figure 15 <i>The Ninth of November 1888</i> 1890 William Logsdail Oil on canvas, 187 x 272 cm Guildhall Art Gallery, London</p> <p>(pp. 171, 172-173, 224, 239)</p>
 <p>Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014</p>	<p>Figure 16 <i>Demolition of Old London Bridge</i> c. 19th century J.W.S. Oil on canvas, 53 x 79 cm Guildhall Art Gallery, London</p> <p>(pp. 171, 242)</p>
 <p>Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014</p>	<p>Figure 17 <i>The Last Evening</i> 1873 James Tissot Oil on canvas, 72 x 103 cm Guildhall Art Gallery, London</p> <p>(pp. 171, 174-175, 241)</p>
 <p>Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014</p>	<p>Figure 18 <i>Defeat of the Floating Batteries at Gibraltar, September 1782</i> <i>(The Siege of Gibraltar)</i> 1783 – 1791 John Singleton Copley Oil on canvas, 544 x 754 cm Guildhall Art Gallery, London</p> <p>(pp. 171, 238)</p>



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 19
The Music Lesson
 1877
 Frederic Leighton
 Oil on canvas, 93 x 95 cm
 Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(pp. 171, 175, 243, 269)



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 20
Ego et Rex Meus
 1888
 John Gilbert
 Oil on canvas, 160 x 104cm
 Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(p. 171)



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 21
Lancelot du Lac
 1886
 John Gilbert
 Oil on canvas, 91 x 122cm
 Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(p. 171)




 <p>Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014</p>	<p>Figure 22 <i>The Thames by Moonlight with Southwark Bridge, London</i> 1884 John Atkinson Grimshaw Oil on canvas, 75 x 127 cm Guildhall Art Gallery, London</p> <p>(pp. 171, 175, 244)</p>
 <p>Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014</p>	<p>Figure 23 <i>Les Trois Princesses (The Three Princesses)</i> 1881 Edward Matthew Hale Oil on canvas, 132 x 207 cm Guildhall Art Gallery, London</p> <p>(p. 234)</p>
 <p>Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014</p>	<p>Figure 24 <i>John Philip Kemble, as Coriolanus</i> 1798 Thomas Lawrence Oil on canvas, 387 x 179 cm Guildhall Art Gallery, London</p> <p>(pp. 212, 235)</p>



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 25
Pleading

1876

Lawrence Alma-Tadema

Oil on canvas, 22 x 36 cm

Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(pp. 236)



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 26
The Betrothed

1892

John William Godward

Oil on canvas, 43 x 83 cm

Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(pp. 213, 229, 236)



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 27
Too Early

1873

James Tissot

Oil on canvas, 71 x 102 cm

Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(p. 236)



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 28
Sun and Moon Flowers

1889

George Dunlop Leslie

Oil on canvas, 72 x 72 cm

Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(pp. 223, 225, 237)



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 29
***The Palace of Westminster,
London***

1892

George Vicat Cole

Oil on canvas, 127 x 213 cm

Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(p. 237)



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 30
***Henry VIII and the Barber
Surgeons***

c. 1543

Hans Holbein the Younger

(Additions and re-workings mid-
16th century and 17th century)

Oil on canvas, 44.5 x 74.9 cm

Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(pp. 213, 237)



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 31
***Queen Victoria Enthroned in the
House of Lords***

1838

George Hayter

Oil on canvas, 269 x 221 cm

Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(p. 238)

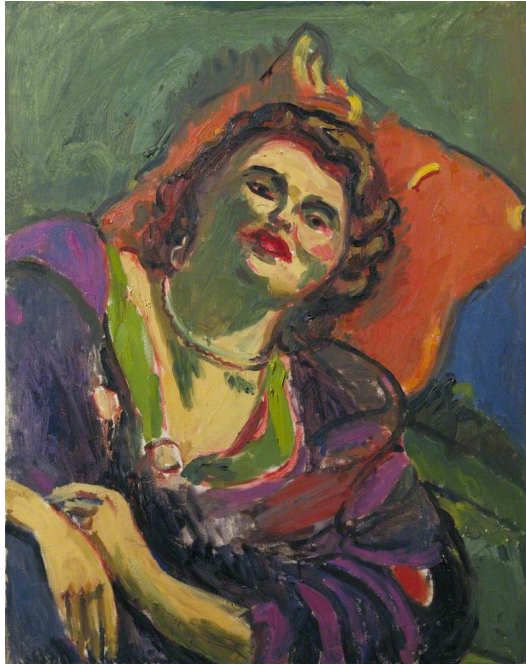


Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 32
Patricia Neal

1954

Matthew Arnold Bracy Smith

Oil on canvas, 91 x 71 cm

Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(p. 212, 238)



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 33
Clytemnestra

1882

John Collier

Oil on canvas, 239 x 174 cm

Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(p. 239)

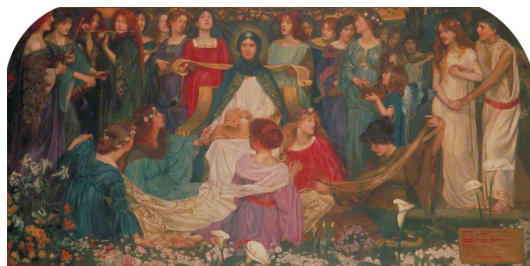


Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 34

The Blessed Damozel

1895

John Byam Liston Shaw

Oil on canvas, 94 x 180 cm

Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(p. 240)

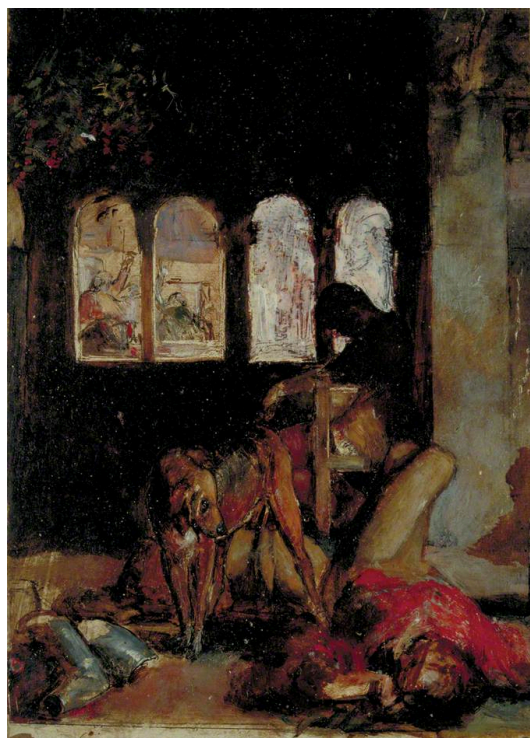


Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 35

Study for '*The Eve of St Agnes*'

c. 1847 – 1848

William Holman Hunt

Oil on board, 27 x 19 cm

Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(p. 240)



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 36

Ariadne in Naxos

1875

George Frederic Watts

Oil on canvas, 75 x 94 cm

Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(pp. 240)



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 37
Married for Love
 1882
 Marcus Stone
 Oil on canvas, 98 x 122 cm
 Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(pp. 212-213, 221-222, 241)



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 38
A Pythagorean School Invaded by Sybarites
 1887
 Michele Tedesco
 Oil on canvas, 274 x 495 cm
 Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(p. 241)



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 39
The Thames during the Great Frost of 1739
 1739
 Jan Griffier II
 Oil on canvas, 47 x 65 cm
 Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(p. 242)



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 40
My First Sermon
 1863
 John Everett Millais
 Oil on canvas, 92 x 77 cm
 Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(p. 242)



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 41
My Second Sermon
 1864
 John Everett Millais
 Oil on canvas, 97 x 72 cm
 Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(p. 242)



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 42
The Sleeping Couple
 c. 1658 – 1660
 Jan Steen
 Oil on copper, 20 x 25 cm
 Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(pp. 209-210, 243)



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 43
The Reading of the Bible by the Rabbis (A Souvenir of Morocco)
 1882
 Jean Jules Antoine Lecomte du Noüy
 Oil on canvas, 76 x 132 cm
 Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(p. 243)



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 44
The Pyrrhic Dance
 1869
 Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema
 Oil on panel, 31 x 81 cm
 Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(p. 244)



Image: © City of London Corporation, 2014

Figure 45
The Banquet Scene
in Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'

1840

Daniel Maclise

Oil on canvas, 183 x 305 cm

Guildhall Art Gallery, London

(p. 244)

Acknowledgement and thanks is extended to the Guildhall Art Gallery, The Art Institute of Chicago, Tate Galleries, Musée du Louvre and National Galleries Scotland for the reproduction of these images.

APPENDIX 2: Auto-ethnography (Blog Entry)

Museum Pilgrim at the British Museum

Whilst the entwined nature of visiting cultural attractions and the concept of pilgrimage is not a new idea – think of the Grand Tour – this article highlights how there is a renewed focus on the museum-goer as a secular (though sometimes spiritual or religious) pilgrim of culture. And by ‘museum-goer’ I mean those who attend museums, art galleries and other similar cultural organisations.

Through my PhD research into the emotive experience of engaging with paintings in the art gallery, and the associations this has with well-being, I often seem to return to this idea of ‘spirituality’ – again both the religious and secular, depending on the visitor and with what they are engaging. Recently I attended an exhibition that consolidated the concept of visitor as pilgrim in my mind – ‘Grayson Perry: The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman’.

When we arrived at the entrance to the exhibition, clutching our “golden” entry tickets, there was no doubt about the identity of the protagonist who organised this exhibition. The first visual delicacy the visitor is greeted by is Perry’s bespoke and very striking motorbike – furnished with its own portable shrine carrying the cuddly deity, Alan Measles (or at least his stunt double). Perry and Alan had previously shared a tour of Germany astride this decorative ‘Kenilworth AM1’.

The journey through the exhibition is intended to be a journey through the mind of Perry, the artist. In a wider context it is a ‘pilgrimage’ through identity, creativity, mortality and spirituality. The exhibition provokes existential inquiry and the questioning of one’s own identity – now and in the afterlife.

After months of trawling through the bowels of the British Museum, Perry presents us with this ‘pilgrimage’ through a collection of historical artefacts by ‘unknown’ craftsmen and women, juxtaposed with his own individualistic creations. From the outset Perry proclaims that he is by no means a historian, or an ethnographer. He is an artist. Despite this proclamation he successfully manages to explore our

approach to history through an ethnographic display of objects and artefacts. Each one contributing to the coherent dialogue dedicated to concerns of identity, creativity, mortality and spirituality. Perry even positions his profession within ethnographic parameters by terming artists as 'just another tribe', as seen in a Telegraph video about the exhibition (Waters and Elkhershi, 2011). Embracing the analogy of the 'tribe', Perry and his exhibition dissolve the barriers between three tribes – craftsmen and women from the past, the celebrity artist and the contemporary viewer – by a unanimous mutuality of identity and mortality.

One of the great successes of the exhibition is the way the intriguing objects Perry discovered in the depths of the British Museum's collections are interspersed with his own vivid and evocative artworks. It really is a journey of curiosity and wonderment as one eagerly anticipates the next object that might be discovered. Despite the wealth of intrigue and history in the exhibition Perry advises the visitor not to 'look too hard for meaning here'. As a demonstration of this, whilst there are thematic titles and text for each section of the exhibition, there is little in-depth interpretation of each of the objects, aside from the basic factual descriptions (dates, titles and brief descriptions of materials). If anything, moderation is an effective interpretive device as the visitor is able to wander through the exhibition and delight at each object in this eclectic 'cabinet of curiosities', without having to feel they need to saturate themselves with additional information. Even without extensive interpretation there is no doubt that each object confronts specific issues. Whilst we are made to question our own identity and mortality through the objects produced by unknown crafts-people and a famous artist – the irony is that the objects themselves evade all of our own mortality purely through their existence.

APPENDIX 3: Auto-ethnography (Blog Entry)

Making ‘Scents’ of Painting at Tate Britain

With excitement at the approaching opening of the ‘Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Avant Garde’ exhibition at Tate Britain I was interested to hear about an innovative event called ‘Scented Visions: A multisensory tour of the Pre-Raphaelites exhibition and private view’. The concept was to experience a tour of the Pre-Raphaelite exhibition through the sense of smell, combining History of Art with an introduction to complementary perfumes. Having never heard of such an event, and as an enthusiast for museum and gallery interpretation, I was intrigued to see how this multi-sensory occasion would work. Not to mention it was on the opening day of the exhibition so I was looking forward to seeing inside, so I booked my mother and myself a ticket.

The visual and olfactory tour was co-run by two knowledgeable specialists. Odette Toilette and Christina Bradtstreet. Odette ‘is the purveyor of olfactory experiences, who runs Scratch+Sniff events, which offer audiences alternative ways of discovering the world of perfume’. Christina ‘researches the role of smell in nineteenth-century art and aesthetics. She is currently writing a book on the subject of representation of scent in painting and visual media as well as the introduction of perfume into early performance art’. Taking a dual perspective – one from the world of perfumery and one from Art History – the event would use an innovative interpretative strategy to assist in engaging with paintings in a new way. The event concentrated on the multi-sensory, focusing on paintings that embodied concepts of smell (e.g. flowers), sound (e.g. the presence of musical instruments), touch (e.g. the use of touch and texture within the painting), and of course the visual. Through highlighting seven paintings within the exhibition the event introduced eight scents to accompany and complement these, of which I will now give a brief account.

The first painting, *The Blind Girl* (1856) by John Everett Millais (1829-96), represents a young blind girl begging with a younger, sighted girl by her side. The whole painting alludes to the sensory through various iconography – the blind girl;

the bright colours of the rainbow; the potential sonorous capabilities of the instrument on the older girl's lap. The idea of grass is also very prominent in this painting – incorporating sight, touch and the imagined 'smell of grass', as was mentioned by John Ruskin in his description of this painting.

To complement this painting we were given a scent called '*L'Amandière*' by HEELEY Parfums. James Heeley is an Englishman who now lives and works in Paris, creating scents inspired by nature. It combines scents of green almond, jasmine, rose and Tilia. There is a distinct smell of grass in this scent that does complement the image in the painting. The almond tones add a milky edge to make the smell more multi-layered and less stark. We were advised to have a good look at the painting then close our eyes and smell the perfume. The perfume did swathe me in a grassy aura and help me to imagine being inside the painting. Odette stated that smelling perfume in front of the painting was 'a visceral way to reach back to the painting'. I was interested to see where the tour would take us next as we positioned ourselves in front of the next painting.

Convent Thoughts (1851) by Charles Allston Collins (1828-73) is a very contemplative image and full of religious symbolism, including the passionflower the nun holds that symbolises the Passion of Christ. The nun is in a garden surrounded by other flowers, again evoking the sense of smell. It is the thought of the scents of various flowers that led to the introduction of two different perfumes for this painting. First was *Lily and Spice* by Penhaligons. This is a floral fragrance with an oriental edge that was launched in 2006. It has head notes of White Madonna Lily and Saffron; heart notes of Hot Pepper and Clove; and base notes of White Musk, Patchouli, Vanilla and Benzoin. Apparently it is hard to find perfumes based on just the scent of lily, perhaps due to its over-powering potency.

The next perfume for this painting was *Une Rose*, created by Edouard Fléchier for Editions de Parfums Frederic Malle. The strong rose bouquet accompanied by an earthy aroma did create a pleasing olfactory experience alluding to a garden. The smell had an intricately layered texture with some surprising tones, as described on the website:

The intoxicating, earthy aroma of a garden rose pulled from the ground with its roots—that's "UNE ROSE". Edouard Fléchier marries the voluptuousness of the flower to the carnal depth of a new truffle accord laced with woody and animal notes. A fruit and honey burst of Turkish rose absolute is punctuated with geranium and wine dregs. Une Rose—the master's rose.

Next we looked at *Thoughts of the Past* (1859) by John Roddam Spencer Stanhope (1829-1908) – the painting of a pensive woman of ill repute in her lodgings. Her fall from grace is considered to be allegorically synonymous with the dirt and smog of London, as seen through the window. In Victorian London the air was strongly polluted and this painting was actually produced the year after 'The Great Stink', when the stench of human waste was unbearably strong. There was also still a resonating fear of 'miasma' during this time from the medieval era, which was based on the belief that disease was caused by a form of 'bad air'. In Odette's words, the woman in this painting could be considered to be 'as tainted as, or tainted by' the polluted air seen outside of her window.

The perfume that accompanied this painting was a recreation of an oriental perfume from c. 1908, produced by Stephen Nelson from Darasina. This was a heady and sensuous scent that one could imagine emanating from a boudoir. Odette commented that if she gave this scent a colour it would be similar to that of the midnight/deep purple gown of the figure in the painting. Both are as equally sumptuous and sensuous.

Lady Lilith (1866-68) by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82) was accompanied by the perfume *Ottoman*, produced by Angela Flanders. The rose infused scent was chosen to echo the strong sweetness emanating from this painting, and the intensity to reflect the confined parameters of the composition. Concepts of interiority also coincide with Flanders original pursuit of creating room scents to produce a sense of atmosphere. The scent directly related to the roses behind Lady Lilith created a mimetic sensory experience, whilst the combination of the floral and the spicy adheres to the concept of a seductress.

We then looked at Rossetti's *The Blue Bower* (1865), which combines a hybrid of medieval and oriental symbolism. The perfume chosen to complement this was *Hasu-no-Hana* by Grossmith. Whilst we were told it would have been customary for ladies during the time of this painting to only wear a very light scent with a single note, this perfume was meant to conjure up thoughts of the symbolism within the painting. When the perfume was launched in 1888 more complex perfumes and the wearing of perfume generally was more customary. *Hasu-no-Hana* would apparently have been worn by wealthy women of high social standing.

The final painting we looked at as part of this tour was *Autumn Leaves* (1856) by Millais. This is considered to be a *vanitas* painting, alluding to the transience of youth and beauty. The autumnal scene and sense of twilight looming creates a sense of the end of the life and fertility of summer, with evocations of memory. The smokiness of *La Fumée* by Miller Harris captures the imagined smouldering autumn aroma when looking at this painting, with its scents of 'citrus, spice, smoke and wood'.

This concluded the tour, when we were then given 10 minutes to briefly look around the rest of the exhibition. As a final surprise we were presented with a sample of perfume to take away – *Ophélia* by James Heeley. So my mother and I sauntered off with the sample in hand to find the painting of *Ophelia* (1851-52) by Millais in the exhibition. The delicate, fresh and floral smell of this perfume is reminiscent of femininity; the naturalistic imagery in the painting of this tragic tale; the symbolism of flowers in the Victorian era; and the perfume designer's own admiration for the character in this painting. This is created by scents of 'green stems, water lily, jasmine, ylang ylang, tuberose, white musk, grey amber and moss'.

In conclusion, I admire Tate's innovative approach to art interpretation and am inspired by both the talkers' areas of expertise. Also, I feel I have learned more about concepts of smell in Victorian times, and of the history and design of perfume. In their independent capacities I am mutually interested in paintings and

perfume – I will definitely be back to see the exhibition properly and fully intend to learn more about perfume. (I am looking forward to reading Christina's book and attending more Scratch+Sniff events in the future.) The event has awakened me to further consideration of the multi-sensory experience of engaging with paintings and thinking about the sensory elements within them. It has also expanded my consideration of approaches to interpretation in the art gallery and concepts of memory.

However, I feel that on a tour of the exhibition the added element of perfume did not personally enhance my experience of engaging with paintings. I feel the subjectivity of smell is too complex to attribute to a painting and could in fact distract from the engagement, providing a limitation on your sensory recollections and subjective experience of sense perception. Perfumes consist of too many varying tones in each one to truly capture the essence of the scene within an individual painting. It is interesting to theoretically and thematically consider the visual and the olfactory together but in practice seeing an exhibition with someone's personal choice of accompanying scents did not enhance my engagement with the paintings or the Pre-Raphaelites. Maybe I am just not Avant Garde enough!

APPENDIX 4: Auto-ethnography (Blog Entry)

Unravelling a Royal *Perplexity* at Kensington Palace

Setting off from home one late morning, with my mother and younger brother in tow, I was greatly excited by the prospect of exploring the newly refurbished Kensington Palace – which had only just re-opened to the public a few days previously. On a sunny day both the temperature and expectations were high, particularly with the hype surrounding the refurbishment and the nation's knowledge that this would soon be the home of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

The sunshine that veiled the approach to Kensington Palace highlighted the transformed vista provided by the newly landscaped gardens. The new Kensington Palace garden was created by Landscape Architect Todd Longstaffe-Gowan and his associate James Fox, who were influenced by the royal gardener, Charles Bridgeman (1728 – 1738) in their creation of a historically informed yet contemporarily executed design. The new design has opened up the garden and the access to the palace from the main Kensington Gardens, providing a picturesque accessibility that had previously been obscured by visual and physical impediments, such as hedges and fences. Through this new design the palace becomes a prominent feature of Kensington Gardens, rather than a peripheral curiosity as it had been previously. The sensorial clarity and coherence provided by the gardens was soon to be transformed into a sense of *perplexity* on entering the Palace.

On entering the main entrance to the Palace it was unclear where to go – however, the luminosity of a light art installation enticed us in. The sculpture *Luminous Lace* (2012) was produced by Loop.pH and, according to the Kensington Palace website, is 'made from almost 4km of electroluminescent wire and contains nearly 12,000 Swarovski crystals'. This is a striking artistic intervention in the palace, with the creeping radiance of the lights and Swarovski crystals alluding to the collection of royal costume held by Royal Historic Palaces, and perhaps a particular

acknowledgement of the lace wedding dress worn by Catherine Middleton, Duchess of Cambridge, at her wedding to Prince William on 29th April 2012.

Following this we managed to find the right door to the ticket hall where we collected our tickets and were pointed in the right direction for the starting point of the tour – the Vestibule. Here we were presented with a map by friendly staff but given little additional explanation or guidance. Overwhelmed by the crowded confusion of other visitors trying to orientate themselves we headed through the nearest door we found, which happened to lead to the exhibition of ‘Diana: Glimpses of a modern princess’.

The passageway that leads into this display is covered with bespoke wallpaper emblazoned with illustrations of Princess Diana – using an innovative decorative device that creates context and engagement. Using the stylistic medium of fashion illustration the artist, Julie Verhoeven, effectively captures many of the significant moments and iconic outfits in Diana’s life. The wallpaper successfully visually contextualises the exhibition as you are led into a small dark room presenting a juxtaposition of dresses and images of Diana in the respective outfits. The room is presented as a theatrical installation produced by Art Director and Stylist, Finola Inger. There are five iconic dresses presented alongside photographs of Diana in the dresses, and some illustrations of the dress designs, giving a real depth and emotional tangibility to the display. However, the darkness and compact nature of the room induces slight claustrophobia – an effect that cultivates a sense of a shrine or mausoleum, tingeing the exhibit with sadness and nostalgia. Perhaps this was the intention. Either way, I can’t deny that it had an emotional impact on me.

Having prised ourselves out of this room we decided to head straight to the top floor, in the hope it would be a little less busy. With a lift immediately available on leaving the Princess Diana exhibition we traversed the first floor and arrived at ‘The King’s State Apartments’ and ‘The Queen’s State Apartments’. Here we were plunged into a fantastical environment with real-life costumed figures sauntering around, artistic interventions and whispering voices. The architectural and historical surroundings are undeniably enthralling in themselves and are

enlivened by this re-creation of the palace. There are also some fantastic costumes, paintings and artefacts to delight the visitor. However, I did have some reservations...

Visiting with a fourteen-year old young man and my mother (the latter of whom would probably consider herself a bit of a traditionalist) we were all slightly *perplexed*. Firstly, we could not find any obvious information provided for the rooms or the objects in them. Whilst we had acquired a guidebook (which is very interesting and informative in its own right) this gave little information about the contents in each room. And, besides, we didn't want to limit the sociability or visuality of the experience by having a nose buried in a book as we walked around. With the guidebook put aside for subsequent perusal, the supposition seemed that you either had a sound knowledge of British History or were not interested in historical fact on your visit. We later discovered that we were meant to ask the costumed figures any questions we may have. We were not made aware of this – and I think between the three of us we would have enough questions to keep them busy for the rest of the day! Also, not everyone enjoys the interpersonal approach to finding out information – particularly if one is shy. And what to do at peak times when there are hoards of people with their own questions to ask? Would there be a queuing system? The other *perplexing* aspect of the visit to the State Apartments was that we kept finding 'playing cards' everywhere with different figures on each – what did this all mean? We would find out later that using the lift made us miss out on the crucial first step of this 'game'

These apartments certainly used innovative interventions and interpretative devices to engage visitors. As an indulgent, imaginative, fantastical and awe-inspiring experience the re-creation of the State Apartments is wonderful – especially as the concept of stories, imagination, exploration and discovery are all becoming increasingly prevalent for visits to cultural establishments. However, for those who are interested in factual information – and more detail about interiors, objects and historical events – it might seem there is something lacking, or that the installations and theatricality are superfluous.

After having explored these rooms and feeling suitably *perplexed*, we decided to venture downstairs, back to the Vestibule. On the way down the stairs we noticed a cabinet with a card in it, which was entitled 'The Game of the Court' – aha! Had we missed something? We also noticed that at the bottom of the back page of the map we were given at the outset it advised us to pick up '*The Lord Chamberlain's Pamphlet*' if we wanted to discover how to play the 'games of the court'.

I decided to approach one of the staff in the Vestibule to see if they could shed some light on the situation. They were very friendly and helpful – and from their response it transpired we should have gone up this particular staircase and passed the cabinet before we entered the upstairs apartments. The card we missed at the beginning was a trail we should follow to find out which member of Court we were. Having used the lift we by-passed this completely and therefore missed out on the 'game' and were instead just overly confused by the cards scattered everywhere. We also asked about the pamphlet, which they told us was not available yet. Even with this knowledge I believe we may still have been *perplexed*.

So, on to the final exhibition, Victoria Revealed – my personal favourite area of the 'new' Kensington Palace! The reasons for this include the access to more obvious factual information; the selection and abundance of objects; and the way the objects were displayed. Also, I enjoyed the fact that the exhibition still retains a contemporary dynamism without being overly fantastical and tangential. A favourite object of mine out of those displayed is Queen Victoria's wedding dress. It often seems that items such as costume, shoes and everyday common objects create great reciprocals for engagement – something we can all empathise with. This exhibition concluded our visit, and with a quick stop in the new café for a much needed caffeine fix we were on our way out into the 'real' world.

Overall, I found the visit to the refurbished Kensington Palace both intriguing and frustrating. I admire the attempt to reinvigorate a sleepy historical building to engage a wider and more diverse audience. It is also great how a historical palace employs the work and ideas of contemporary creative individuals. Whilst Kensington Palace have further developed the ideas which were used for the

‘Enchanted Palace’ I feel the idea of the fantastical and imaginary has perhaps been overly developed to the extent that I was left feeling *perplexed*. This did however send me away with the desire to research more into the history surrounding the palace, and indeed to come back to Kensington Palace to see how the experience compared on a second, and probably unaccompanied, visit. Therefore, perhaps Kensington Palace are much more shrewd than they may appear to the more traditional museum visitor. Perhaps Historic Royal Palaces have found the key to further encouraging engagement, an interesting talking point and to encourage repeat visits – perhaps *perplexity* is the key.

APPENDIX 5

Looking at Paintings: Pilot Online Survey

Question 1.

How would you describe your knowledge of art galleries?

- ☐ Novice
- ☐ Amateur
- ☐ Enthusiast
- ☐ Expert

Comment

Question 2.

How would you describe your knowledge of paintings?

- ☐ Novice
- ☐ Amateur
- ☐ Enthusiast
- ☐ Expert

Comment

Question 3.

What kind of visitor are you? (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2005)

Please note that you can choose more than one option.

- ☐ Social
- ☐ Intellectual
- ☐ Emotional
- ☐ Spiritual

Comment

Question 4.

How often do you go to art galleries (approximately)?

- ☐ Once a week or more
☐ Once or twice a month
☐ 3 – 4 times a year
☐ Less than 3 times a year
☐ Never

Comment

Question 5.

Describe in up to 100 words an encounter you have had with a painting.

Question 6.

Please note that all answers will be used for research purposes. Answers may also be published in the final research report, in related articles and online. Would you be happy for your answers to be anonymously published in the following ways?

	Yes	No
Final Research Report	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Published Articles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online (Website; Facebook; Blog; Twitter, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question 7.

Would you be prepared to have a follow-up interview by email? If so, please provide me with your name and a contact email address.

This information will not be shared with any third parties.

APPENDIX 6

Engaging with Paintings: Online Survey

Question 1.

How would you describe your experience of art galleries?

- ☐ Novice
- ☐ Amateur
- ☐ Enthusiast
- ☐ Knowledgeable
- ☐ Professional

Comment

Question 2.

How would you describe your experience of paintings?

- ☐ Novice
- ☐ Amateur
- ☐ Enthusiast
- ☐ Knowledgeable
- ☐ Professional

Comment

Question 3.

What kind of visitor are you?

Please note that you can choose more than one option.

(Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2005)

- ☐ Social
- ☐ Intellectual
- ☐ Emotional
- ☐ Spiritual

Comment

Question 4.

How often do you go to art galleries (approximately)?

- ☐ Once a week or more
- ☐ Once or twice a month
- ☐ 3 – 4 times a year
- ☐ Less than 3 times a year
- ☐ Never

Comment

Question 5.

Describe in up to 100 words an encounter you have had with a painting.

Question 6.

Please note that all answers will be used for research purposes. Answers may also be published in the final research report, in related articles and online. Would you be happy for your answers to be anonymously published in the following ways?

	Yes	No
Final Research Report	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Published Articles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online (Website; Facebook; Blog; Twitter, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question 7.

Would you be prepared to have a follow-up interview by email? If so, please provide me with your name and a contact email address. This information will not be shared with any third parties.

APPENDIX 7: Auto-ethnography (Blog entry)

The 'Celebritisation' of Painting: a catalyst for an underwhelming encounter?

Finally meeting that celebrity who has always inhabited the starry realm just out of reach of your own reality – what a momentous occasion! That revered writer, admired artist, worshipped sportsperson, respected TV personality, esteemed musician, or adored actor perhaps. It is one of those rare moments in life where the thin partition dividing reality and fantasy finally dissolves. You have dreamt of this moment – thought about the coherent, profound words you would utter and how you would act with complete composure – and more than anything, how this would change your life forever.

But what happens when this meeting occurs only to shatter the wonderment that has been projected on this celebrity? The friendly and funny TV personality who it transpires is grumpy and boring; the dynamic actor who is in fact dull and distant; the awe-inspiring artist who is actually just rude and egocentric. You suddenly realise that the reality is in fact far inferior to the perceived perception of this idolised figure. Whilst these are just fabricated scenarios, would you still be glad you met her/him in such an instance?

It is the over-sensationalised hype and prevalent media that often elevates celebrities to their dizzying heights. Whilst skill and talent is undeniable, the personality and impact of the individual can be exaggerated beyond reasonable reality. It seems this can be the case with paintings too, as well as those blockbuster exhibitions.

During my current research into encounters with paintings one of the most recurrent responses from people so far has been the experience of seeing Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* (c. 1503-06) (Figure 4, p. 310) for the first time. The prevalence of this particular encounter is an accolade to the celebrity status of this painting. However, whilst some found the experience lived up to heightened expectations, for many others the experience was underwhelming. I am not denying the skill, dexterity and enigmatic quality of the painting. I am however

interested in how the hype surrounding a painting, art gallery or exhibition, and hence expectations, can be detrimental to the actual engagement with the 'original' thing.

Many of those sharing their experience of seeing the Mona Lisa complained that the hectic, noisy atmosphere and number of people surrounding the painting made it impossible to get close or to immerse oneself in it. Although others stated that even when it has been equally busy or noisy when seeing other paintings the disappointment has never been quite so potent. Expectations seem to have been elevated by the 'celebritisation' of this painting, only to be dashed by that eventual encounter.

Some people claimed that the painting was much smaller and darker than they had anticipated – making a case for the virtues of the reproduction (surrogate) over the authentic, where clarity and intimacy can be provided. Whilst I believe reproductions have their place, particularly for access and educational purposes, I have always endorsed the experience of engaging with the original painting. In this instance however it appears overall that the original Mona Lisa is not as impressive as the expectations created by its fame or engagement with reproductions. It also leads to the displacement and transferable nature of the 'authentic' experience.

I have to confess, my first experience of seeing the *Mona Lisa* was similar to those who found it underwhelming. I too had seen this iconic painting emblazoned on the pages of many art history books, on the screen of my computer, and featured in numerous television programmes. Having studied Art History, and with a passion for art galleries, I would not miss out on a first trip to the Louvre Museum when in Paris for the weekend. Although not there just to see the *Mona Lisa* I was not going to turn down an opportunity to come face-to-face with this 'wonder of the world'. As for many others, the painting was smaller, darker and further away (due to the hoards of people) than I had anticipated. I was unable to have the same immersive and reflective experience as when staring at a reproduction of the image in the pages of a book.

What surprised me the most was how empty other parts of the gallery were, where other fantastically executed paintings adorned the walls – you could all but press your nose against some of the paintings! For example, in the room filled with Rubens paintings there was a mere few of us wandering around in relatively glorified isolation. There was also the most affective image I was confronted by on this first visit to the Louvre – *The Raft of the Medusa* (1818-19) by Théodore Géricault (1791 – 1824). The entwined torsos created a labyrinthine sense of trauma, whilst the sheer scale of the painting affectively immersed me in the brine-tinged tragedy. What was it about this painting that affected me more than the *Mona Lisa*?... Was it the scale of the painting? The quiet and empty gallery? Was it the ability to get so close to the painting yet be able to appreciate the impact from further away? Was it the complexity yet coherence of the composition? The skilful execution of the traumatic scene? Was it the human tragedy and sense of pathos that permeated the painting? Was it the fact that, whilst this painting is famous, there was not quite so much hype surrounding it so my expectations were not so high?

I am not the first by far to think about the sometimes underwhelming encounter with the *Mona Lisa*. Amelia Gentleman has previously written an article for the Guardian (October 2004) based on her experience of spending a day watching and talking to people who had come to see the *Mona Lisa*. 'Smile, please' gives an insight into 'a day in the life of' this iconic painting. As well as giving a brief history of how this painting rose to its current status, Gentleman also draws on various writers who have been equally intrigued by the *Mona Lisa*.

Gentleman describes how Darian Leader, the author of *Stealing the Mona Lisa: What Art Stops Us from Seeing* (2004), states that '[p]eople no longer study [the Mona Lisa]. It is no longer a painting, but has become a symbol of a painting.' This questions how hype, media and celebritisation can impact the affect of engaging with a painting. Gentleman also draws on Gombrich who 'says the picture has become so worn out by all these references that it's almost impossible 'to see it with fresh eyes'. Therefore, can we only have a purely affective experience when

engaging with a painting of which we have no prior knowledge? Can original paintings be separated from the symbols they become? Does this 'symbolisation' detract from a purely affective experience when engaging with an original painting, or make it affective in a different way?

The consideration of the experience of engaging with paintings also opens up the exploration of the different types of engagement with visual art. A visit to an art gallery or museum has often been considered as a spiritual experience in a secular church. Therefore, a visit to see an iconic image would be comparable to making a pilgrimage. This is defined in Gentleman's article by a quote from a guide, Bruno de Baecque, who describes going to see the *Mona Lisa* as 'a quasi-sacred experience'. Despite the underwhelming experience for some, the original painting must still retain its emotive impact for others. And whilst a disappointing encounter with a must-see tourist attraction could be pivotal to the whole memory of a trip to Paris would you want to miss out on seeing one of the most iconic paintings in the world?

All these considerations have caused me to focus on the inverse of my current research. Whilst I, as many others, have been concentrating on the power of paintings – the aura, the emotive affect, the immersive experience – I realise I could have put more emphasis on the consideration of the potential underwhelming experience of engaging with paintings. How would people answer the question – what is the most underwhelming painting you have ever seen?

APPENDIX 8

Engaging with Paintings: On-site Survey

General Art Gallery Visitor Questionnaire

1. **How would you describe your knowledge of art galleries?**
(You can tick more than one box)

- ☐ Novice
- ☐ Amateur
- ☐ Enthusiast
- ☐ Expert
- ☐ Professional

Comment:

2. **How would you describe your knowledge of paintings?**
(You can tick more than one box)

- ☐ Novice
- ☐ Amateur
- ☐ Enthusiast
- ☐ Expert
- ☐ Professional

Comment:

3. **What kind of visitor are you?**
[Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2005]
(You can tick more than one box)

- ☐ Social
- ☐ Intellectual
- ☐ Emotional
- ☐ Spiritual

Comment:

4. **How often do you go to art galleries?**

- ☐ Once a week or more
- ☐ Once or twice a month
- ☐ 3 – 4 times a year
- ☐ Less than 3 times a year
- ☐ Never

Comment:

Guildhall Art Gallery: Visitor Experience Questionnaire

- 1. What was the most memorable aspect of your visit? Why?**

- 2. What was the most memorable painting you saw today? Why?**

- 3. How did your visit compare to other visits you have made to art galleries?**

- 4. Why do you go to art galleries?**

If you would be interested in participating further in this research by dedicating an hour of your time to explore the collections and be interviewed please provide your name and email address or email Bella Sharp: aestheticology@hotmail.com

Name:.....

Email:.....

APPENDIX 9

Guidance Notes for Pilot Ethnographic Research Study

Aestheticology: visualising emotion and well-being in the art gallery³⁵ A Pilot Study

Guidance Notes for Participants

The purpose of this research is to explore the emotive affect of engaging with paintings in the environment of the art gallery and the impact this experience has on well-being.

As a participant in this research you will be involved in a small-scale ethnographic study, taking the following format:

Brief:

- You will be provided with a basic outline of the research and your role as a participant.
- You will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm you have voluntarily engaged in the research and are happy for the data to be used (anonymously) for research purposes, and potentially publication.
- You will be asked to fill in a 'Personal Mood Map' – explaining your current 'mood' prior to the gallery visit.

Gallery Visit:

- You will be given 30 minutes to explore the Guildhall Art Gallery on a self-led tour.
- You will be provided with a stopwatch, which will sound when your allocated visit time has ended.
- You will be provided with a map of the gallery, paper, a pencil and camera to record your journey around the gallery.

You will be asked to annotate the map – providing a key to associated thoughts and responses using the paper provided.

[Example: write '1' on the map where you have your first significant thought, comment or response. On a separate piece of paper write '1' and next to it (using words or drawings) provide your thought, comment or response.]

If you choose to use the camera provided to capture images of your visit please still mark this on the map and on the key write 'photo', the number of the photo in the order that they are taken and a brief description of the image taken.

- Following your gallery visit you have a ten-minute comfort break before the interview.

³⁵ This title was initially used during the process of carrying out the ethnographic research study but was later changed.

Interview:

- Prior to the start of the interview you will be asked to complete your 'Personal Mood Map' with your current 'mood' following the gallery visit. This will be done in a different colour pen to your original responses.
- During the interview you will be asked some questions about your experience of visiting the gallery. This will be an opportunity for you to provide an account of your gallery visit.
We may also discuss the responses you have collected on your visit around the gallery.
- Please note that there will be an audio recording made of the interview.
The maximum time for the interview will be one hour.

Following the interview you are free to leave or continue looking around the gallery and amphitheatre.

Additional Notes:

- Arrive promptly to start at your allocated time.
- Please **do not** go in the amphitheatre before or during your gallery visit – this area is not being included in this particular research study. You are welcome to visit the amphitheatre following your involvement in the pilot research study.
- You will be provided with a pencil, pen, camera and stopwatch to use for the duration of your involvement in the pilot research study. You are not required to bring any other resources.
- All of the above information will be provided verbally during the brief at the beginning of your participation in the pilot research study and you will have the opportunity to ask any questions. However, if you have any queries prior to this please do not hesitate to contact me.

Please note that you may be contacted following this research study for subsequent enquiry.

Thank you for taking the time to be involved in this research study - your contribution is greatly appreciated.

APPENDIX 10

Ethnographic Research Study: Interview Prompt Questions

- 1. Tell me about your visit to the Guildhall Art Gallery today.**

- 2. What was the most memorable aspect of this visit? Why?**

- 3. What was the most memorable painting you saw today? Why?**

- 4. How did your tour of the gallery today compare to other visits you have made to art galleries?**

- 5. Why do you go to art galleries?**

APPENDIX 11

Ethnographic Research Study: Experience Questionnaire

Engaging with Paintings: Questionnaire

1. How would you describe your experience of art galleries?

- ☐ Novice
- ☐ Amateur
- ☐ Enthusiast
- ☐ Knowledgeable
- ☐ Professional

Comment:

2. How would you describe your experience of paintings?

- ☐ Novice
- ☐ Amateur
- ☐ Enthusiast
- ☐ Knowledgeable
- ☐ Professional

Comment:

3. What type of visitor are you?

Please note you can choose more than one option.

(Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2005)

- ☐ Social
- ☐ Intellectual
- ☐ Emotional
- ☐ Spiritual

Comment:

4. How often do you go to art galleries?

- ☐ Once a week or more
- ☐ Once or twice a month
- ☐ 3 – 4 times a year
- ☐ Less than 3 times a year
- ☐ Never

Comment:

APPENDIX 12

Ethnographic Research Study Consent Form

Institute of Education Doctoral Research Study

Consent Form

Research Title:

*Aestheticology: exploring, defining and evaluating the experience of engaging with paintings in the art gallery.*³⁶

Please read the following statements.

If you agree with these statements and are happy to proceed with your participation in the research study as set out in the Guidance Notes and on this Consent Form then please fill in the details at the bottom of the page – providing your name, the date and your signature.

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Guidance Notes provided to me.
2. I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions and make any enquiries I have about the research.
3. I understand that my involvement in this research study is completely voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time, without giving any reason.
4. I understand that the information I provide as part of this study will be used anonymously for research purposes, including being published in the final PhD thesis, as well as potentially being published in other publically accessible publications.

Name of participant:.....

Date:.....

Signature:.....

³⁶ This title was initially used during the process of carrying out the ethnographic research study but was later changed.

APPENDIX 13

Ethnographic Research Pilot Study: Feedback Questionnaire

Aestheticology: visualising emotion and well-being in the art gallery

Pilot Research Study: Feedback Form

- 1. How would you describe your experience of participating in this pilot research study?**

- 2. Were there any parts of the pilot research study that you particularly enjoyed?**

- 3. Were there any parts of the pilot research study that you particularly disliked?**

- 4. Do you feel there were any parts of the pilot research study that needed to be amended or excluded?**

- 5. Please provide any additional thoughts or comments about this research and/or your involvement as a participant in the pilot research study.**

APPENDIX 14

Ethnographic Research Study: Follow-up Questionnaire

Institute of Education Doctoral Research Study

Guildhall Art Gallery Visit: Follow-up Questionnaire

1. Briefly describe the visit you made to the Guildhall Art Gallery as part of this research study.
2. What was the most memorable aspect of this visit to the Guildhall Art Gallery? Why?
3. What was the most memorable painting you saw on this visit to the Guildhall Art Gallery? Why?
4. How did this visit to the Guildhall Art Gallery compare to other visits you have made to art galleries?
[If possible please specify whether the visits to any other art galleries mentioned were made before or after the visit you made to the Guildhall Art Gallery as part of this research study.]
5. Have you re-visited the Guildhall Art Gallery since your involvement in this research study?
If, so please describe briefly your subsequent visit(s) and how it/they compared.
6. Describe briefly your most memorable visit to an art gallery.
7. Describe briefly the most memorable encounter you have had with a painting.
8. Any other comments.

APPENDIX 15: Auto-ethnography (Blog Entry)

The Scale of Humanity: Andreas Gursky at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen

Leaving London behind for a moment, it is now time to venture slightly further afield. This is a Blog about my personal discovery of Andreas Gursky at a recent, and first, visit to Copenhagen.

A couple of weekends ago I headed to Copenhagen for my first ever visit to Denmark. The weekend consisted of culinary indulges and cultural delights. One of the highlights of the trip was venturing on the train slightly out of town to the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in northern Zealand.

The museum, which was founded in 1958, is dedicated to international art from 1945 onwards and modelled itself on MOMA in New York – particularly in ‘broadening the concept of modern art to include architecture, design, photography, film, etc.’ The museum is embedded in picturesque surroundings overlooking the Øresund, combining original patrician domestic architecture from 1855 with contemporary additions beginning from the time the gallery was founded – the most recent structural additions completed in 1998. An important part of the design for the museum has been to integrate sensitively designed interiors and buildings into the natural environment. This is most strikingly achieved by the large and abundant windows creating a thin, transparent veil between the cultivated interior and the naturalistic exterior, providing a coherent sensory experience. Modern sculptures are also effectively embedded in the idyllic naturalistic environment surrounding the museum.

Whilst I could greatly expand on the overall detail and experience of visiting the wonderful Louisiana Museum I would like to dedicate this piece to my discovery of Andreas Gursky. I appreciate that this discovery of the renowned international photographer might be slightly belated but my shame in this lack of knowledge is compensated by the visual and emotive impact Gursky’s works had on me.

The images by Gursky that are first discovered on the tour of the Louisiana were curiously, yet effectively, juxtaposed with large sculptures by Alberto Giacometti. Two large-scale photographs from Gursky's *Bangkok* (2011) series are entwined with a visual and sensory montage of image, sculpture, architecture and nature. These beautiful photographic renditions of water reflect the lake seen through the gallery window and seem to enhance the naturalistic environment. The dynamic aqueous abstractions mesmerizingly lure you in before shocking you with the presence of various detritus evident in the image on closer inspection. Rubbish floats through these picturesque waterscapes, bringing environmental issues to mind, yet without detracting from the aesthetic potency of the images. The looming Giacometti figures present in the room also add further consideration of humanity to the experience, with the age-old conflict of nature versus human nurture – or neglect in the case of the abandoned rubbish. Despite the introduction of a serious global issue the artworks and surroundings still retain sensory harmony and delight. As you venture further through the labyrinthine corridors, rooms and garden of the gallery you finally reach the current 'Andreas Gursky' exhibition (running until 13th May 2012).

The first most noticeable element of most of these images is the sheer magnitude of scale – submerging the viewer in the minute detail of nature and humanity as each image looms over you. The size of the images emphasise the metaphorically implied small scale of the individual in comparison to each incident captured, and hence to the wider world. At the same time the viewer's visual knowledge is enhanced and cerebral appreciation of nature and humanity sharpened. On a visit to this exhibition you are provided with the time and magnification to really scrutinise the tiniest of details that might be overlooked, or not visually available, through general human perception. The quiet and white gallery space allows each image to speak loudly for itself, and really enhances the clarity, colour and composition. You are provided with a contemplative environment to analyse these images and cogitate your own relation to the world: to nature and to humanity.

Being so immersed in this exhibition and enveloped by the images, it was not until returning home to London that I was suddenly curious about the technical

construction of the photographs. Surprisingly the near impossibility of the scale and detail had not mystified me whilst at the exhibition. On further reading I discovered that Gursky uses computer technology to digitally weld together numerous photographs, defining and refining them. This technique produces the 'complete' creation we see on the gallery wall. The use of computer technology does not detract from his obvious skill as a photographer but emphasises how Gursky uses the tools at his disposal to enhance this media and create striking, consuming images. Due to this construction of the final images Gursky refers to them as "structures". I feel this also aptly refers to their large physical scale, and the natural and manufactured architectonic configurations within these images. Shapes, colour and patterns provide an abstract construction from a distance – only to be replaced by the most exhaustive formation of detail on closer inspection. I was genuinely enthralled by all of the images. Each image seems to provide a suspended slice of nature and humanity, available for our close inspection and consideration. Through Gursky's work the photographic practice of the artist leads to the analytic implementation of the viewer.

On reflection, my discovery of Gursky reminded me of my first encounter with *The Raft of the Medusa* by Théodore Géricault at the Louvre in Paris. Whilst the media, colour, composition and era do not seem to have anything in common, the initial impact of the large scale over-powered my senses in both instances. Having only previously seen the painting in books – and never tried to visualise the dimensions provided – I had not quite conceived how large the work would be. The scene in the painting itself is traumatic and grotesque - the viewer plunged right in the middle of this catastrophe. This emotive impact evokes a sense of the wind prickling against your skin and the taste of brine on your tongue, as you survey the disturbing scene. I couldn't quite take myself away from the painting, despite its vivid depiction of such a disastrous event. For me it provided another example of the impact of scale and its relation to the perception of humanity. Combined of course with the artist's skill and precision.

I am by no means insinuating that scale will always provide effective emotional impact; or implying that all works of art should be large. I am sure scale can be

used to provide negative impact if the image is aesthetically objectionable. Both Gursky and Gericault are highly skilled artists – with an ability to cleverly combine colour, composition and content to provide that strong emotive impact. With this skill, using their chosen scale in these instances works to enhance the emotive capacity probably already inherently embedded in each image.